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Conquest, Consequences, Restoration: The Art of Rebecca Belmore

Kathleen DeBlassie

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CONQUEST, CONSEQUENCES, RESTORATION:

THE ART OF REBECCA BELMORE

BY

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B.F.A., Studio Art, University of New Mexico, 1999

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts
Art History**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

December, 2010

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Paul and my children Paul IV, Katherine, Maria, and Victoria. I am grateful for their love, support and encouragement during this process. It is also dedicated to the spirit of *hózhó*; that we may all learn to walk in beauty.

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I am extremely grateful to Rebecca Belmore who gave me permission to reproduce her images and allowed me to interview her when she was in New Mexico, in spite of her obvious fatigue and the demands on her time. I also thank

James Luna, Carolee Schneeman, Marina Abramović, the estate of Ana Mendieta and all the museum curators, collections managers and archivists who gave me permission or helped me obtain permission for the images reproduced in this thesis.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Rebecca Belmore (Ojibwa/Anishinabe, b. 1960 in Upsala, Ontario), embraces three themes in her oeuvre: conquest, consequences and restoration. Through the mediums of performance art, installation, video and photography, Belmore confronts Indigenous issues regarding land theft, identity, gender, racism, stereotypes, memory, contested histories, and the recovery and reclamation of a decolonized self. All of these themes are sub-categories that fall under the larger theme of the consequences of conquest. The most significant component of Belmore's work, however, is restoration, which embraces themes of healing, self-determination and sovereignty.

Traditional art-historical methodologies can and have been used to analyze Indigenous art. This thesis proposes that Indigenous art is best examined through Native performance traditions as suggested by Courtney Elkin Mohler's theatre praxis. Mohler argues that the goal of Indigenous performance art can be achieved through

(1) exposing popularly accepted racial and ethnic stereotypes as identity constructions; (2) rewriting history in a manner that repositions historically marginalized and objectified cultures as active subjects; (3) utilizing residual creative energies that transcend the normative methods for "art making," thereby exposing an alternative indigenous worldview; and (4) destabilizing historical "facts" that constitute an essence of "timelessness" and edifice of authority for neocolonial and imperialist practices.¹

These four components are an integral part of Belmore's work. Because Belmore utilizes her own body as the primary medium, she becomes at once the text, the victim, the victor, and catapults the performance into the arena of restoration.

¹ Mohler, 245.

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Chapter 1

**The Spirit of Resistance is actually living the philosophy,
history, culture and ways of our People.²**

Debra White Plume, Oglala Dakota

Introduction: Conquest and Consequence

The history of Aboriginal art in the United States and Canada has been fraught with controversy, as have been Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships. Depictions of Aboriginal people have been manipulated, romanticized or vilified, depending on governmental agendas or whims of the dominant culture.³ Governmental and missionary boarding schools throughout the United States and Canada sought to control how Aboriginal people were to be educated and what was appropriate subject matter in artistic production.⁴

Likewise, exhibitions of the art work of First Nations and Native American artists have been placed within an

² Debra White-Plume, quoted in *Hózhó: The Beauty of Native Women*, a documentary film by Beverly Singer which details the activism of Native women throughout the Americas as they reassert their roles as leaders within their Native communities.

³ See Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 1-9, introduction (entire book). See also Singer, *Wiping the War Paint Off the Lens*, foreword by Robert Warrior vii-xi, entire book.

⁴ See Brody, *Indian Painters and White Patrons*, 89-90; also Rushing, "Critical Issues in Recent Native American Art," 6-14; Dubin, "Sanctioned Scribes: How Critics and Art Historians Write the Native American Art World," 149-165. All three references provide information regarding the history of Native American art, compulsory pedagogical approaches endured by Aboriginal peoples, and the manner in which Aboriginal art has been displayed, oftentimes without mention of living artists.

ethnographic framework that romanticizes Aboriginal people of the past while denying their contemporary existence.⁵ To further complicate matters, First Nations people of Canada and Native Americans in the United States "still live under colonial conditions."⁶ Canadian performance artist Rebecca Belmore (born, 1960), of Ojibwa (Anishinabe) descent, living in Vancouver, British Columbia, tackles the above-mentioned concerns with ferocity in her art practice. Belmore's primary objective is to give voice to Aboriginal concerns in a way that avoids traps inherent in the discussion of conquest, consequences and restoration. Glorification of the past, reinforcement of myths surrounding the stereotyping of Aboriginal people, and "complaint art" that catalogs past wrongs endured by Aboriginal people without providing solutions for correcting the contemporary fallout are the traps that Belmore circumvents.

Virtually every article written about the art of Rebecca Belmore describes her work as confronting

⁵ Ibid; see also Nemiroff, "Modernism, Nationalism, and Beyond: A Critical History of Exhibitions of First Nations Art," 16-41.

⁶ Nemiroff, "Modernism, Nationalism, and Beyond: A Critical History of Exhibitions of First Nations Art," 39. This is from a quote by Jimmie Durham in which he states that "We know the world through whatever specific cultural constructs we have. But 'Indians' of the Americas have a subtle colonial overlay to our self-definition which is almost impossible to separate out. Then, because we all still live under colonial conditions, we have a political responsibility to our own people."

Indigenous issues regarding land, identity, gender, racism, stereotypes, memory, contested histories, and the recovery and reclamation of a decolonized self. All of these themes are sub-categories that fall under the larger theme of the consequences of conquest. The most significant component of Belmore's work, however, is restoration, which embraces themes of healing, empowerment, sovereignty and self-determination. Belmore utilizes the mediums of performance art, video, photography and installation to tell her stories. The use of performance art seems an obvious fit for Belmore with its past roots embedded in protest and politics, art that took place outside conventional art spaces such as museums and art galleries. Feminist performance artists also use the medium in much the same way, where the "personal becomes political."⁷ However, their focus has been on the exclusion of women from the art world and Western patriarchal notions of gender that have left out women of color. While both methodologies are evident in Belmore's work, a brief examination of performance art and

⁷In February of 1969 Carol Hanisch wrote a paper for The Women's Liberation Movement. In this paper one of the statements made by Hanisch was the personal vs. the political. This paper was published in 1970 as an article in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation*. It was the editors of this book, Shulie Firestone, and Anne Koedt who gave the paper the title, *The Personal is Political*. To read this paper and Hanisch's thoughts about it written some thirty years later (in January 2006), see Hanisch's website, <http://www.carolhisch.org/CHwritings?PIP.html>.

feminist performance art practices reveals the differences. Belmore recognizes the discrepancies between the two and, by so doing, she transcends identity politics by tapping into "what makes us human."⁸

Belmore commented drily at a public forum in Santa Fe, New Mexico, February 17, 2009, that "conquest happened, it's over, nothing can be done about that...it is the current state of affairs that must be remedied."⁹ With this in mind, Belmore juxtaposes historic events with contemporary reality thereby illustrating the continuity of colonialism. For Belmore there is no "post-colonialism;" "neo-colonialism" is the more appropriate term. This is in keeping with the tenets of Native performance manifestos that began to arise in the sixties and seventies. These strategies often involved collaborations between various Indigenous groups, particularly the Chicano Movement and the American Indian Movement. Shared experiences of

⁸ Burgess, "The Imagined Geographies of Rebecca Belmore," 15. This particular passage refers to Belmore's memorial to the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing presented at Site Santa Fe in 1995; see also Belmore, "Longing and Belonging: From the Faraway Nearby," 1995.

⁹ *Conversations to Remember: Native Women in Performance, Installation and Video* was held at IAIA on February 17, 2009. The subsequent title given to the exhibition at IAIA from June 26, 2009 to January 31, 2010 was *Badlands*, held in conjunction with the Land/Arts Project. Bonnie Devine, Lori Blondeau, Erica Lord, and Rebecca Belmore were the featured artists and panelists. The flyer and e-mail announcing the panel stated that "The four artists have differing backgrounds and life experiences, yet their work investigates common themes: land, identity, memory history, and the recovery and reclamation of a decolonized self." www.iaia.edu.

displacement, land grants, land treaties, racism and common heritage due to intermarriage were significant factors in these alliances. These movements, however, have unfortunately recreated the sexism found in Western European patriarchy.

Belmore says that she was inspired by Native American performance artist James Luna (born 1950), of Luiseño/Mexican decent, living on the La Jolla reservation in California, and Cuban-born artist Ana Mendieta (1948-1985), whose performance-based art expressed her displacement from her homeland.¹⁰ The influence of Luna and Mendieta, and the way that they deal with colonial issues, can be seen and will be discussed thematically in such works by Belmore as *Rising to the Occasion* (1987), *Artifact 671B* (1988), and *Wild* (2001), which parallel Luna's work, and *Vigil* (2002) the video portion of *The Named and the Unnamed* (2003), *Blood on the Snow* (2002), *Fringe* (2008), and *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to their Mother* (1991), which approaches are akin to Mendieta's methods.

Mawu-che-hitoowin: A Gathering of People for any Purpose (1992), *Making Always War* (2008), and *Victorious* (2008) refer to the boarding school experience and the

¹⁰ Bradley, "Art and the Object of Performance," 44.

colonial practice of erasing Aboriginal identity. Boarding schools were created to civilize Aboriginal people through erasure of language, culture, and religious ceremonies which were to be replaced by values from the dominant culture, thereby assimilating Aboriginal people.

Vigil, Fringe, and Wild (2001) refer to the violent nature of the subjugation of Aboriginal people and the subsequent gendering of conquered peoples as feminine and, therefore, dependent and expendable.¹¹ Sexual violence, one of the devastating effects of conquest on women, is a predominant theme in these works. However, Andrea Smith defines sexual violence as not limited to the physical act of rape but as taking place on many levels. Sexual violence, according to Smith, is the tool of genocide and occurs in land theft, abuse of the land in the form of uranium mining and toxic waste dumped on Native land, and the appropriation of Aboriginal culture and spirituality.¹² This is precisely what Belmore is attacking through her work. In *Freeze* (2006), Belmore confronts the topic of racial violence that is directed toward Aboriginal men.

¹¹ Trexler, *Sex and Violence: Gendered Violence, Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas*, 13; see also Introduction, chapter 1 and chapter 2. Trexler writes that men were often raped, too. They seldom lived to tell the tale. Women were allowed to live and carry the memory of rape. See also Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Volume 1, 135.

¹² Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, 1-6.

This work focuses on "police assisted freezing deaths commonly known about in rural communities of Canada, but potentially unknown or cared about by the art public in a metropolitan city."¹³

Highly political and controversial, Belmore approaches her subject matter fervently and unafraid. She has also stated numerous times that she "does not recognize borders."¹⁴ Borders to most Aboriginal people are the invention of colonialism in an effort to confiscate Native lands and eventually "incarcerate" them separating them, from "civilized society." It is the shared suffering of colonized people and their relationship to the land, known as transnationalism, that Belmore speaks of when she says this.¹⁵

¹³ Crosby, "Humble Materials and Powerful Signs: Remembering the Suffering of Others," 77.

¹⁴ Public Forum: *Conversations to Remember: Native Women in Performance, Installation, and Video*, was held at IAIA on February 17, 2009.

¹⁵ Huhndorf, "Picture Revolution: Transnationalism, American Studies, and the Politics of Contemporary Native Culture," 359-361; Huhndorf says that "Native Americans acknowledge no borders and seek nothing less than the return of all tribal lands... Maps have been weapons of imperialism." See also Huhndorf, *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*, introduction 1-24. Huhndorf outlines the growth of transnationalism from nationalism which focused on individual tribes and their specific concerns. The political climate of the 50s, 60s and 70s and the artistic/literary developments that sprang from these eras led to a transnational dialogue between Indigenous people of colonized countries and the continued colonization of other countries. Women have been prominent voices for their own people and other Indigenous peoples as they confront the environmental, political and racial effects of globalization.

Belmore gives a great deal of attention to women and has said that she is interested in exposing the horrors of violence, particularly violence against women.¹⁶ This is a crucial element in the history of colonialization because of its effect on gender roles and genocide. The way that Indigenous women came to be identified and stereotyped by their conquerors would have a profound effect on the way they would be situated within contemporary society hundreds of years later. This, in part, can be explained through the Malinche/Pocahontas/Sacajawea syndrome.¹⁷ These three women came from different geographical areas and time periods within the history of conquest of the Americas. Its effect on them was similar and has become the model by which Native women are judged. However, the work of historian Jean Barman provides extensive documentation on the projections on Aboriginal women by colonists, missionaries and the government officials in British Columbia.¹⁸ Her research will be used in this paper to chart the damaging results of such attitudes, particularly the way in which

¹⁶ See video of Belmore at an artist talk she gave on March 24, 2007 sponsored by the Brooklyn Museum of Art in conjunction with exhibition, *Global Feminisms Remix*, which ran from August 3, 2007 to February 3, 2008. http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/global_feminist/artist.

¹⁷ This is my phrase for explaining the attitudes that developed toward Native women.

¹⁸ Barman, "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender Power Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900," 237-266; Barman, *West Beyond the West*, Chapter 8, Disregard of Native Peoples 1858-1945.

Native women have been silenced. This historic background makes Belmore's work about women especially provocative.

When asked if she was speaking specifically about the silence forced upon aboriginal women because much of her work centers around "voicelessness," Belmore said that she was talking about "the way in which we are all afraid to speak out, because we run the risk of being ostracized, ignored, or labeled as a troublemaker. There is also the chance that someone will listen and you never know which way it will go."¹⁹ With this statement Belmore asserts herself as a leader within her Ojibway culture.²⁰ Belmore is restoring the gender balance which was disrupted and almost destroyed by colonialism. She is also reclaiming the feminine principle as discussed in the essays provided in Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop*.²¹

Belmore's work can be viewed through a postmodern discourse and the avant-garde. Blocker's definition of

¹⁹ Conversation with Belmore, June 26, 2009.

²⁰ Buffalohead, "Farmers, Warriors, Traders: A Fresh Look at Ojibway Women," 236-238. Before non-Native interference Ojibway women were autonomous in that they worked and shared leadership roles with men. Most of the history of Aboriginal women is told through the eyes of white men who misunderstood gender roles and compared them to their own white European gender roles.

²¹ Gunn-Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, xii, 2-7, 209-221. It is dangerous to apply one rule or theory regarding Indigenous gender practices to tribes within the United States, Canada, or throughout the world. The consensus of most scholars is that Indigenous people, particularly women have been disempowered as a result of colonialism. See Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*, 41-61.

postmodernism, "the theoretical disputation of the terms of difference and identity, the analysis of subjectivity and authority, and the reconceptualization of history,"²² can easily elucidate Belmore's art. She works in an unconventional manner which is consistent with postmodern theories. Belmore seeks to change contemporary political wrongs through her art which is the supreme belief of avant-garde artists. While much of Belmore's work has a decidedly feminist quality, feminist theories prove to be inadequate descriptors. The best methodology for transcribing Belmore's work resides in contemporary Native performance art. Courtney Elkin Mohler discusses the ways in which an indigenous theatrical praxis "fosters alternative modes of empowerment and works to decolonize."²³

Mohler writes:

(I argue that) this can be achieved through (1) exposing popularly accepted racial and ethnic stereotypes as identity constructions; (2) rewriting history in a manner that repositions historically marginalized and objectified cultures as active subjects; (3) utilizing residual creative energies that transcend the normative methods for "art making," thereby exposing an alternative indigenous worldview; and (4) destabilizing historical "facts" that

²² Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta?*, 4.

²³ Mohler, "We are not Guilty!" the Creation of an Indigenous Theatrical Praxis," 245. She is speaking of the way in which the plays *Bernabé* by Luis Valdez and Teatro Campesino and *Foghorn* by Hanay Geiogamah and the Native American Theater Ensemble (NATE) illustrate this praxis. It is easily applied to other Native works be they performance art, theatre, music or dance.

constitute an essence of "timelessness" and edifice of authority for neocolonial and imperialist practices.²⁴

These tenets of Mohler's theatre praxis are at the heart of Belmore's work. Belmore is also acting out an essential element in Native performance; it is the action of telling the story that liberates the performer and the audience.²⁵ In this way Belmore challenges the status quo in contested histories, the contemporary Native milieu, and the stereotypes that thwart Native and non-Native alike.

²⁴ Mohler, 245. See also Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*. 32-42, 69-92.

²⁵ Scott, "Embodiment as a Healing Process: Native American Women and Performance," 135; Scott says, "While it is the performer herself who is healed, by witnessing their performances, that embodied healing can be shared by the audience and wider community."

Chapter 2

Where It all Began: Performance

Belmore attended the Ontario College of Art and Design between 1984 and 1986. Right after she left school, the Thunder Bay Art Gallery organized her first exhibition (around 1986-1987). She was hired by the gallery to take her drawings into Aboriginal communities throughout northwestern Ontario. She rented a van, loaded it with artwork, and went to communities accessible by road. Initially thrilled by the prospect, she set up her work, yet time and time again, no one came, which was quite devastating at that moment. She said:

It was an experience that profoundly affected the future of my work. I decided that this way of bringing work to my own people was not for me. My next work was the beaver house dress titled *Rising to the Occasion* (1987, figure 1) which I wore for a royal visit in our territory. I felt a lot better about my sense of direction from then on.²⁶

She then turned to performance art as a means of expression and gave up drawing altogether.²⁷ Performance art which grew out of artists' desire to express themselves in new ways with new materials which were outside conventional

²⁶ Interview with Scott Watson, cited in *Fountain*, 2005, 24. The information for the second paragraph comes from this interview. *Rising to the Occasion* is seen by many critics and biographers of Belmore as her first public success. See also Townsend-Gault, "Rebecca Belmore and James Luna on location at Venice: The Allegorical Indian Redux," 725.

²⁷ O'Rourke, Debbie. "An Artist in the New Wilderness: Interventions by Rebecca Belmore," 28-30.

modes of expression was, for Belmore, idyllic.²⁸ Rosalee Goldberg writes that performance became an accepted medium of expression in the 1970s due to the popularity of conceptual art which valued the ideas behind art more than the finished product.²⁹ However, Paul Schimmel posits that the real shift occurred due to the political, philosophical, social and economic changes that took place during and after World War II.³⁰

Performance art provided a creative outlet in which artists could express the anxiety created by the new climate of uncertainty presented by the aftermath of World

²⁸ See the introduction in Goldberg, *Performance Art from Futurism to the Present*, 7-9. Goldberg states that "Whenever certain schools of thought such as Cubism, Minimalism, or Conceptual Art reach an impasse, artists have turned to performance as a way of breaking down categories and indicating new directions," 7; "Whether tribal ritual, medieval passion plays, Renaissance spectacle, or 'soirées' arranged by artists in the 1920s in their Paris studios, performance has given the artist a place in society," 8. "The history of performance art in the twentieth century is the history of a permissive, open-ended medium with endless variables, executed by artists impatient with the limitations of more established forms and determined to take their art directly to the public. For this reason, its base has always been anarchic. By its very nature, performance defies precise or easy definition beyond the simple declaration that it is live art by artists. Any stricter definition would immediately negate the possibility of performance itself. For it draws freely on any number of disciplines and media for material- literature, poetry, theatre, music, dance, architecture and painting as well as video, film, slides and narrative- deploying them in any combination. Indeed no other artistic form of expression has such a boundless manifesto since each performer makes his or her own definition in the very process and manner of execution," 9.

²⁹ Ibid, 7.

³⁰ Schimmel, "Leap into the Void: Performance and the Object," 17. Schimmel notes that artist's ability "to travel internationally to a historically unprecedented degree, and the rise of mass media affected art production. Artists in New York, Japan, and Europe became quickly aware of what was being produced artistically and were influencing one another as a result," 17-18.

War II. Indigenous people have lived with the fear of annihilation since conquest and Western expansion and have suffered from "post-colonial stress"; they never know what is going to be taken away next. For the greater part of the world, the events surrounding World War II, such as the Holocaust and the unleashing of the atomic bomb, gave a new sense of fragility to human existence.³¹ Subject matter revolving around life, death, saving the planet, social justice and social consciousness came to the fore. The decades following World War II, the fifties, sixties and seventies, ushered in the Black Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement, the Chicano Civil Right Movement, also known as El Movimiento, and the American Indian Movement. There was a concerted effort to challenge the dominant Western male view in the socio-political arena, and this challenge became a significant part of performance art both in the United States and abroad. The birth of the American Indian Movement and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement led to collaborations between the two and the proliferation of

³¹ Schimmel, 17-18. See also Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta? : Identity, Performativity, and Exile*, 5.

performance art as a means of expression for political concerns shared by both movements.³²

Performance artists became critics of contemporary society. Shunning traditional materials such as paint and canvas, artists began to use their own bodies. The rejection of "object making" was a denunciation of the art market which was exclusionary in nature. The inclusion of the viewer became an essential key in completing the work of art.³³ The rejection of the art object originated with Duchamp who initiated new ideas regarding the making of art.³⁴ Duchamp was a major influence particularly, in America. The "Black Mountain collaborators" (Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina), John Cage (composer), Robert Rauschenberg (painter), and Merce Cunningham (dancer/ choreographer) experimented with new media in art (with Duchamp's guidelines in mind).³⁵ Cage

³² Wilmer, S. E. *Native American Performance and Representation*, 1-16. See also, Mohler, "We are not Guilty!" *The Creation of an Indigenous Theatrical Praxis*," 243-249.

³³ Rush, *New Media in Art*, 21-25.

³⁴ Rush, 21;

³⁵ Rush, 22-23. The German artist Joseph Beuys was also a part of the *Fluxus* movement. He is mentioned because of the interest in his performance, *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974). James Luna would make fun of this performance by staging his own, *Shaman: Petroglyphs in Motion* (2000). Beuys had an interest in shamanism and the colonialization of Native Americans. He said that "Coyote was an American action; the coyote complex reflected the American Indians' history of persecution as much as the whole relationship between the United States and Europe. I wanted to concentrate only on the coyote. I wanted to isolate myself, insulate myself, see nothing of America other than the coyote... and exchange roles with it. This action represented a

began teaching Duchamp's concepts to his students at the New School for Social Research in New York. The intermedia movement that grew out of these early experiments was known as *Fluxus* and was first organized in the 1960s by George Maciunas, who wrote the *Fluxus Manifesto*.³⁶ *Fluxus* was international in scope; its members were artists, writers poets, musicians and filmmakers who were "avant-garde and anti-art," particularly "high art" and the notion that real art was the property of museums and collectors.³⁷ *Fluxus* performances actively engaged the viewer, who completed the work of art.³⁸ Artists were now free to express emotions and ideas within the confines of art that could be deemed "inappropriate" in everyday situations.³⁹

transformation of ideology in the idea of freedom." See Goldberg, 151. Beuys' description of his work is problematic for the Native community. According to Lara M. Evans, the coyote represents the untamed, uncivilized, non-human Indigenous people, while Beuys represents the superior European culture and remains captor and colonizer. See Evans, *One of These Things is not Like the Other*, 106. For Evans' complete analysis of the performance by Beuys and Luna's performance which quotes/pokes fun at Beuys, see pages 104-108. See also Schimmel, 80-84 for more on Beuys.

³⁶ Rush, 24; see also Schimmel, 21-22.

³⁷ Rush, 24.

³⁸ Rush, 25; "Fluxus events became the perfect embodiment of Duchamp's dictum that the viewer completes the work of art." See also Goldberg 152-154.

³⁹Vergine, *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language*, 9, 25; Vergine quotes psychologist and art historian Ernst Kris in her discussion about the relationship between the spectator and the artist and the function of "art illusion" created in performance art. In 1952 Kris said that " ...The maintenance of the aesthetic illusion allows us the security to which we aspire and it likewise guarantees freedom from the sense of guilt, since the fantasies to which we are giving our attention are not our own. All of this favors the growth of feelings that we would hesitate in other circumstances to allow ourselves: in

A prime example of "inappropriate" behavior outside regular social situations was the nude body employed by a large number of feminist performance artists. Nudity was unacceptable in public; however, ideally under the protective umbrella of aesthetics, feminist performance artists were able to unleash all their energy toward their dissent against a patriarchal society that objectified women thereby negating their personal power.⁴⁰ Museums were a part of patriarchal culture that allowed paintings of nude female bodies by male artists to be exhibited, yet the lack of female artists within those walls was glaringly apparent. Linda Nochlin's essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists" (1971) outlined the social, educational, and economic inequities suffered by women throughout history. These inequities were patriarchal tropes which defined women as "other," incapable and

other circumstances they would lead us back to our personal conflicts. We are also allowed an intensity of reaction that many individuals would be hard put to allow themselves without the protection of the aesthetic situation. We know that in many cases this reluctance is due to the pressures of education that tend under certain cultural conditions to devalue the expression of intense emotion and to allow it to exist only if it is ordered within schemes and institutions. And art is precisely such a socially approved occasion for intense emotional reaction," 25. Theoretically, inappropriate nudity would be acceptable under this definition, however, public nudity was still radical and unacceptable at this time and many feminist performance artists were arrested.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

dependent simply because they did not have a penis.⁴¹

Feminist performance artists confronted these ideologies in their work; they saw these ideologies as limiting women's ability to participate fully in everyday life in the same way that men were. Because their bodies became the "text" for this expression, content was autobiographical.

According to Bradley, the term "the personal is political" was utilized by feminist performance artists.⁴²

Jessica Bradley links the work of early feminist artist Carolee Schneeman (1939) to that of Belmore's performances in that "its politics were, like hers, startlingly present in bodily actions, steeped in sensuous

⁴¹ Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" 148-149. Nochlin outlines the essays by John Stuart Mill, *On the Subjugation of Women*, in which he suggests that we tend to accept whatever is "natural" in social situations: "Everything which is usual appears natural. The subjection of women to men being a universal custom, any departure from it quite naturally appears unnatural." Nochlin says that this idea of what is natural is reiterated in academic studies where art historians have practiced the viewpoint of the white Western patriarchy. This attitude, she goes on to say, is grossly shortsighted not only because of "moral, ethical, or elitist issues, but intellectual considerations as well; uncritical acceptance of what is natural may be intellectually fatal," 146; see also Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, 12. See also Forte, "Women's Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism," 252-254. Forte links this to "Lacanian psychoanalysis which 'reads' the female body as Lack, or Other, existing only to reflect male subjectivity and male desire. Derived from Freudian conceptions of the psyche, Lacan's model articulates the subject in terms of processes (drives, desire, symbolization) "which depend on the crucial instance of castration, and are thus predicated exclusively on a male or masculine subject: "Lacan uses the term 'phallus' to designate the privileged signifier, the signifier of power; but he insists that this is not the same as the biological penis, and therefore does not necessarily reside only with males. However, such distinction ignores the political implications of the terminology," 254.

⁴² Bradley, 44.

materials, and incisively direct."⁴³ Bradley was specifically writing of Schneeman's legendary performance, *Interior Scroll* (1975, figure 2). Further details are provided by Jeanie Forte:

Carolee Schneemann stood nude in front of a mostly female audience, ritualistic paint on her face and body. In dim lighting she began extracting a narrow, ropelike "text" from her vagina, from which she proceeded to read:

I met a happy man
A structuralist filmmaker
-but don't call me that,
it's something else I do-
he said we are fond of you
you are charming
don't ask us
to look at your films
we cannot look at
the personal clutter
the persistence of feelings
the hand-touch sensibility
the diaristic indulgence
the painterly mess
the dense gestalt
the primitive techniques...

The filmmaker finishes his remarks by telling Schneemann that she is not a "filmmakeress"... We think of you as a dancer.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Forte, 255-257. See also, Stiles, "Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions," 296-297. Stiles writes that, "Schneeman still has little institutional support in the art world despite the fact that she has been the model for the practices of so many other men and women for three decades. Most importantly her work was never about violence to the body..." 267. See also Blocker, 7-9. For the full script of the scroll see Schneeman, *More than Meat Joy*, 238-239.

Schneemann presents the viewer with several concerns that are intrinsic to "feminist theory in relation to the postmodern subject."⁴⁵ She gives emphasis to "personal clutter" meaning the "personal is political." She contrasts "masculine" and "feminine" world views that Forte says "are not necessarily biological, but derived from the different ways in which men and women, constructed and conditioned as such, experience the world."⁴⁶ There is notable disdain directed toward the feminine view which is "devalued by the male dominated art world for its lack of logic, rationality, and distance."⁴⁷ In short, her works were considered too personal.

The personal was also political for Cuban performance artist Ana Mendieta (1948-1985), who was a source of inspiration for Belmore. Mendieta was exiled from her Cuban homeland in 1961 along with her sister Raquelín. After leaving they were then placed in an orphanage in Dubuque, Iowa.⁴⁸ This event would shape the rest of her life as she

⁴⁵ Forte, 256; see also, Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," 270-275.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 257.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 157.

⁴⁸ Viso, *Unseen Mendieta*, 14. Her father was an early supporter of Fidel Castro, however, when Castro took over the government her father Ignacio was asked to renounce his Catholic faith and join the communist party, something he could not do. He became involved in counter-revolutionary activities and realized his daughters were involved as well. Fearing for their safety, he sent them to the United State as part of Operation Pedro Pan. Pedro Pan was made possible by the

sought to reclaim her Cuban identity. Mendieta worked as a performance artist, installation artist, photographer, painter, land artist and sculptor. Her art dealt with identity, violence against women and the land, displacement and rituals of renewal or rebirth. She was sympathetic to, yet adamantly opposed to, being associated with "white feminism," or identified as feminist, Hispanic or Latina, or with any single category of art-making.⁴⁹ However, Mendieta was exploring constructions of "gender and the female body as a field of masculine control" in the same other feminist performance artists were.⁵⁰ The seventies was also a time when feminist artists began reclaiming the Goddess, but this was being done by "white middle class women."⁵¹ Mendieta's use of the feminine or Goddess

Catholic Diocese of Miami and was available to Cuban minors seeking political asylum.

⁴⁹ Blocker, 19-21. It is interesting to note that Mendieta exhibited primarily in feminist venues such as A. I. R., The Women's Building, and group shows which focused on Latin American artists. See also Viso, 7.

⁵⁰ Blocker, 11.

⁵¹ Blocker, 19. See also Jacob, *The Silueta Series, 1973-1980*, 8. Jacob explains that "The loss of the matriarchal establishment to patriarchy which in Europe and the Near East came with the ancient conquest by Indo-Europeans, defined a new world order. Deposing the Goddess led to a change of attitude toward the female body and her powers, upset the balance between human beings and nature, and brought about a new, 'natural' relationship between men and women. The devastating effects of these changes, found in catastrophic events such as the death of millions of women branded as witches and our present-day ecological crisis fueled by a disrespect for nature, is centered in centuries-old male domination that has shaped every form of social interaction and endowed men with seemingly god-given ownership rights over women and permission to control their bodies. Thus feminists, and particularly women artists of the 1970s, searched out the Goddess as a means of

principle was entrenched in her knowledge of *Santería* and the belief that the earth was feminine. The practice of *Santería*, which was a mix of religious practices that originated in her native Cuba, became a fixture in her art practice.⁵² When Mendieta created her art, it became for her a spiritual ritual and an act of cleansing and restoring.⁵³

Mendieta began her earth/body/work while an MFA candidate at the University of Iowa.⁵⁴ From 1973 to 1980, Mendieta created a body of work called *The Silueta Series* in Mexico and Iowa. Mendieta embedded her body in the earth, or created impressions of her body in the earth with

empowerment. Mendieta made her art in union with the earth in order to come in touch with this spirit, to give women back their bodies, and to give them power."

⁵² Jacob, *The Silueta Series, 1973-1980*, 4; Jacob says that, "Santería was a source of inspiration for Mendieta. More than any other cultural reference to which she turned, Santería's precepts enabled her to reach a conceptual framework for her art that could contain her artistic, feminist, political, and moral ideas.....Santería was a new world form of Yoruban religion created by the first slaves from Nigeria that came to Cuba in the sixteenth century. Santería became over the next three hundred years of slavery a cultural mixture of religions from Africa and the Americas. They combined their monotheistic pantheon into one supreme deity, *Olodumare*, and lesser gods, *orishas* with that of the Roman Catholic Religion. The name was derived from the Spanish *santo*, meaning, the worship of saints," 4. Jacob's essay provides the most in-depth discussion of Santería and its meaning for Mendieta in her life and art.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 10.

⁵⁴ Viso, 15-17. See also Kastner, "Ana Mendieta and Hans Breder," 368-369. Mendieta was trained as a painter. She was introduced to intermedia art and Fluxus, through her professor Hans Breder. Breder took his students to Mexico in the summers and it was there that Mendieta began to feel a connection to her Latin roots. Breder and Mendieta became collaborators and were involved in a long-term romantic relationship. Her land/body/art experiments began in Mexico where she left her imprint on the beach sand, land, and ancient ruins. Blocker, 103.

mud, gunpowder, blood or red pigment, rocks, flowers and wood. In an artist statement (1978) Mendieta wrote:

The first part of my life was spent in Cuba, where a mixture of Spanish and African culture makes up the heritage of the people. The Roman Catholic Church and "Santería"-A cult of the African Divinities represented with the Catholic saints and magical powers-are the prevalent religions of the nation.

It is perhaps during my childhood in Cuba that I first became fascinated by primitive art and cultures. It seems as if these cultures are provided with an inner knowledge, a closeness to natural resources, and it is this knowledge which gives reality to the images they have created.

It is this sense of magic, knowledge, and power, found in primitive art, that influences my personal attitude to art-making. For the past five years I have been working out in nature, exploring the relationship between myself, the earth, and art. Using my body as a reference in the creation of the works, I am able to transcend myself in a voluntary submersion and total identification with nature. Through my art, I want to express the immediacy of life and the eternity of nature.⁵⁵

Her *artist statement* is referring to *The Silueta Series 1973-1980*. *Grass on Woman* (1972, figure 3) and *Rape Performance* (1973, figure 4) are two of her earliest earth/bodyworks that lay the groundwork for *Silueta* and subsequent work.

Grass on Woman was a celebratory performance which connected Mendieta as woman to the land. This performance was documented through a series of slides and was performed

⁵⁵ Viso, 296.

twice.⁵⁶ The photo shows an unclothed Mendieta lying face down in the grass with grass on top of her back.

Consecutive slides show her fellow students gluing or laying freshly cut blades of grass across her back until her body blends in with the landscape.⁵⁷

Rape Performance (1973) is a jolting contrast to the tranquil *Grass on Woman*. Mendieta performed *Rape Performance* as a protest against patriarchal culture and the rape and murder of a female University of Iowa student.⁵⁸ Angered by the incident, Mendieta invited friends and colleagues to a secluded, wooded area near the Iowa campus.⁵⁹ When they arrived, the audience found Mendieta partially clothed, face down in the ground with her legs covered in stage blood.⁶⁰ The performance was evocative of not only physical rape, but the rape of the land. Her growing discontent with United States policy regarding Third World countries and the exploitation of the cultural and natural resources of those countries found expression in this performance.

⁵⁶ Viso, 77.

⁵⁷ Ibid. The description is provided by Viso.

⁵⁸ Viso, 16; Blocker 15-16. Mendieta began using blood as a medium at this time. In 1973, Mendieta did another performance in Iowa documenting a rape scene, this time in what appears to be a kitchen. For more information on this work see Viso, 55-59.

⁵⁹ Blocker, 15; Jacob, 10.

⁶⁰ Blocker, 15.

Grass on Woman is representative of the human connection to the land as symbolized by Mendieta's body and her relationship to the land. *Rape Performance* depicts a disruption and violation of this link. The person is destroyed and so is the land. The restoration of the bond would become a focal point for Mendieta as she began to incorporate *Santería's* use of blood as a medium into her work.⁶¹ Mendieta said, "I started immediately using blood. I guess because I think it's a very powerful magic thing. I don't see it as a negative force."⁶² In *Santería*, blood was seen as the essence of life and therefore had the ability to purify and empower.⁶³ Although she reenacted the violent act of rape, she saw the spilling of blood as ultimately symbolic of cleansing and the restoration of *ashé*, meaning power. In the rape performances, Mendieta stands in as the victim and gives voice to the suffering of others yet offers transformation and empowerment in so doing. These themes will appear time and time again in the work of Belmore, particularly in the discussion of *The Named and the Unnamed*, *Blood on the Snow*, *Fringe*, and *Freeze*.

Balkan Baroque (figure 5) which was performed by feminist performance artist Marina Abramović (1946,

⁶¹ Jacob, 10-14.

⁶² Ibid, 10.

⁶³ Ibid.

Serbian/Yugoslavian) at the 1997 Venice Biennale, is an example of performance art that makes the performer's body a surrogate for others' suffering.⁶⁴ The work was personal for Abramović who grew up in communist Yugoslavia. Her father Vojo, was a commander in the Serbian army and her mother Danica was a major during the Second World War. After the war they were both declared national heroes. The performance, for Abramović, involved simultaneously feeling her "shame for, and her attachment to her identity not only as a Yugoslav but as the daughter of Vojo and Danica."⁶⁵ In the performance, Abramović was surrounded by fifteen hundred pounds of fresh, bloody cattle bones. For four days Abramović spent six hours scrubbing the bones with disinfectant while weeping and singing folk songs from her homeland.⁶⁶ From all reports, there was a horrible stench in

⁶⁴ Townsend-Gault, "Rebecca Belmore and James Luna on Location at Venice: The Allegorical Indian Redux," 727; Townsend-Gault, "The Named and the Unnamed," 12-13. Townsend-Gault compares Belmore's work with that of Schneeman and Marina Abramović as work that invokes the suffering of others.

⁶⁵ Thurman, "Walking Through Walls: Marina Abramović's Performance Art," 29. Her gallerist, Sean Kelley, advised that she decline the offer to represent her country on the grounds that she would be perceived to be affiliated with Slobodan Milošević. Abramović saw it as "an opportunity to perform an act of mourning for the dead on all sides." She had been invited by the Montenegrin Minister of Culture, however, "when he learned of the price tag, one hundred thousand dollars, he rescinded the letter in a very insulting manner." Abramović found an alternate space in the basement of the Italian Pavilion and won the Golden Lion award for best artist at the biennial.

⁶⁶ Thurman, 29; Scott, "Marina Abramović: Between Life and Death," 116.

the gallery which highlighted the realities of the horror of war and ensuing ethnic cleansing.

Three video screens were installed behind the artist. One video screen was an interview with her mother, Danica, and the other was of her father, Vojo waving a gun and telling grisly war stories.⁶⁷ In the last video, Abramović is seen in a white lab coat, "explaining how Balkans rid themselves of rats by turning them against each other."⁶⁸ Abramović was acutely aware of Serbia's role as the mastermind behind the aggression.⁶⁹ The performance allowed Abramović to embody all those involved in this appalling event in an act of collective bereavement. She approached it in an intimate manner in a style reminiscent of Mendieta and Schneeman.

This position of intimacy is at the heart of Belmore's work. At a public forum on February 17, 2009 at the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, Rebecca Belmore, Bonnie Devine, Lori Blondeau, and Erica Lord presented excerpts from their past and current work and

⁶⁷ Thurman, 29. Thurman also points out that both of these videos were filmed in Belgrade in 1994 when the city was still an armed camp.

⁶⁸ Scott, 116.

⁶⁹ Thurman, 29. Excerpts of this performance can be found online by accessing YouTube at www.youtube.com and typing in Marina Abramović, Balkan Baroque. An explanation of the performance by Abramović and an image of the current installation at MOMA PS1 can viewed through MOMA's website, http://moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/03/19.

answered questions from the audience.⁷⁰ When Rebecca Belmore spoke about her work, she said that the first thing she asks herself before she begins a project is "How can I serve my people? How will what I do benefit my people?"⁷¹ Belmore also stated that she prefers to work outside with the land. She grew up in the small town of Sioux Lookout, Ontario, and she knows she will never go back to that way of life. Although her new life in Vancouver is the "big city" life, Belmore said that she realized that it is part of the new landscape that she inhabits; underneath the asphalt and the buildings, the land is still there. However, she does not wish to deny the importance of the land to people who grew up in a particular environment who do not happen to be Aboriginal.

Belmore is trying to work in an unscripted way with simple materials; using her body is an integral part of her performance. She told the audience that, as an Aboriginal woman, she feels that it is the most honest medium she can use to address issues of colonization and its effects on Aboriginal people; her body becomes the text. Belmore believes in "the anti-object, giving things away, making

⁷⁰ *Conversations to Remember: Native Women in Performance, Installation and Video* was held at IAIA on February 17, 2009.

⁷¹ This sentiment is expressed by Belmore in almost every interview and article recorded about her work.

something so that it can disappear.”⁷² Acutely cognizant of the viewer, Belmore sees them as “performers within her installations” and performances.⁷³ It was the lack of viewers in her first travelling exhibits, after all that led Belmore to the medium of performance and the re-evaluation of content.

The subject matter in Belmore’s work is derived from personal experiences as an Ojibway/Anishinabe woman. Her boarding school encounters at age fourteen, in which she was one of three First Nations students in a school of fifteen hundred and the racism she was subjected to, is embedded in her work.⁷⁴ She recalls a teacher asking, “Do Indians have a drinking problem? (and using it) as a debating point for her class.”⁷⁵ These and other indignities such as being called squaw served to strengthen her resolve to continue. “It took all my courage to not skip school that day. They were not going to make me stay away. My presence was my rebuttal.”⁷⁶ Unfortunately, these

⁷² Laurence, “Racing Against History: The Art of Rebecca Belmore,” 42.

⁷³ O’Rourke, 29.

⁷⁴ Milroy, “Trauma and Triumph,” R2. Belmore’s mother and father had ten children, three of whom died young. “I went to a lot of funerals,” she says.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Belmore remembers that, when the time came to chose sides, those who believed Indians had a drinking problem were placed on one side of the classroom and those who did not think that Indians had a drinking problem were place on the other side of the classroom. Only

incidents were similar to occurrences in boarding school life as many Aboriginal people will testify. Her time in art school would further what she was exposed to in boarding school, making her very much aware of "Eurocentric art ideology" and the "negation" of the art practice of others.⁷⁷

There are differences, however, between Belmore's work and the work of earlier non-Native feminist performance artists. The most notable differences are cultural. Also early feminist performance artists were critiquing the western patriarchal culture to which they belonged. Belmore is critiquing a culture with beliefs foreign to her own, one that gave Aboriginal people the option of assimilation or annihilation. Gender thought in Aboriginal cultures is vastly different than that of Western societies; many First Nations and American Indian tribes were egalitarian, and women shared positions of power.⁷⁸ Within Ojibway culture, women exercised leadership roles as

one boy joined Belmore, but "he had to do all the talking," she says "I just sat there like a stone."

⁷⁷ Belmore, "Autonomous High-Tech Teepee Trauma Mama," 44. When Belmore says "others" she is referring to Western notions of Aboriginal or Indigenous art that is often viewed as primitive and not in keeping with "high art."

⁷⁸ Buffalohead, "Farmers Warriors Traders: A Fresh Look at Ojibway Women," 236. Mihesuah, 42-61 contains more comprehensive information regarding gender roles in various tribes from the United States to Canada. She cautions readers about making wide sweeping claims regarding gender roles as they vary from tribe to tribe..

chiefs, peace negotiators, shamans and warriors, and oversaw numerous tribal details related to everyday life, such as meat distribution and marriage.⁷⁹ Many of the early ethnographers were male and defined Aboriginal gender roles according to Western terms.⁸⁰ One scientist-explorer, Joseph Nicollet, observed correctly while a guest in Ojibway lodges when he wrote that, "family life was not a matter of one sex having power over the other but a matter of mutual respect."⁸¹ Belmore works to overturn the stereotypes ascribed to Aboriginal people, since many of those explorers were not as clear-sighted as Nicollet in their observations.

Rising to the Occasion, (figure 1) Belmore's first successful work, was the performance portion of *Twelve Angry Crinolines* in which twelve women artists paraded through Thunder Bay in response to a visit by Prince Andrew and his new wife Sarah Ferguson, in 1987. Belmore inverted the "common government practice of parading colorful Indians before visiting royalty while ignoring the darker

⁷⁹ Buffalohead, 238-244.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 236. Women were often seen as drudges and treated as inferior. Early ethnographers completely misunderstood the role of women. It was also unlikely that women would share this information with men outside the tribe. This information can also be applied to numerous tribes; see essays in Albers and Medicine, eds., *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*.

⁸¹ Buffalohead, 244; Bray, ed., *Journal of Joseph N. Nicollet*, 188, quoted in Buffalohead, 244.

realities of reservation life."⁸² The gown she created and wore for the visit consisted of tourist kitsch memorabilia from British and First Nations cultures.⁸³ Belmore says of this performance:

I have this beaver house dress...and as "First Lady of this Land," I got to lead this silent parade...And the whole performance was based on the idea of a scandal that broke out in Britain that year where it was discovered that the Queen Mother had five cousins who were mad...and were locked away in an insane asylum. And some journalist dug up the dirt,...And this woman Lynn Sharman, the performance coordinator was making the analogy that women artists suffer the same as the five mad cousins..So it's about how difficult it is to be a woman artist in a man's world...and the erasure of Native women's art history.. The beaver house symbolizes Canada ...so there are those little trinkets and trade goods stuck in the beaver lodge with pictures of Lady Di and Prince Charles with bits of birch bark woven in the bramble...And the headpiece is two braids, which are sticking up just to signify the anger (laughs) and the wheel is my umbrella the invention of the wheel-civilization...and there's two fine bone china breastplates on the chest (laughs).⁸⁴

The bustle and rich velvet cloth of *Rising to the Occasion* also seem to be a comment on the proper, upper class, Victorian woman, and the way in which Victorian women were constricted by their clothing and strict codes of conduct that allowed them little or no rights outside the family sphere. The Victorian era was also a time when there were firm sexual mores for women. These rules would

⁸²Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humor and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, 211-12.

⁸³ Augaitis and Ritter, "Rebecca Belmore: Rising to the Occasion," 9.

⁸⁴ Ryan, 211-212.

have an adverse effect on Aboriginal women as they "scouted around, they dared, they were uppity in ways that were completely at odds with Victorian views of gender, power, and race."⁸⁵ Because they had considerably more power than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, efforts were underway to subdue these over-sexed women.⁸⁶

In this particular work, Belmore turns the tables on playing Indian which was usually performed by non-Aboriginal people. She plays herself, an Aboriginal woman, trying to behave in a way prescribed by non-Aboriginal people. Her manner of bearing and her outfit carry a certain amount of scorn and discomfort. The absurdity of the dress, braids and parasol cause the viewer to laugh at the ridiculousness of the practice of parading anyone. *Rising to the Occasion* is a rejection of the Victorian mores that were forced on Aboriginal people that would make them "good" Indians, by assimilating them into what became mainstream culture. By using her own body Belmore claims her heritage, yet renounces Canada's practices, past and present, that treat Aboriginal people and culture as commodities for tourists or dignitaries. The very act of

⁸⁵ Barman, "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900," 245. Barman also notes that "aboriginal women soon realized that, however much they tried to mimic newcomers' ways, they would never be accepted and might as well act as they pleased."

⁸⁶ Ibid.

displaying Aboriginal people functions as a show-and-tell venue that seems to say, "See how we have civilized them." The little trinkets embedded throughout the dress reference this. Belmore is also making a critical observation about the wildness of Aboriginal people as seen in the birch bark bustle and the civilized non-Aboriginal culture represented by the velvet dress and china.

The parasol wheel acts as Belmore's rebuttal and seems to echo back, "Here is the wheel; we are civilized."⁸⁷ Because she cites the artist James Luna as an influence, an examination of his work is merited and reveals the similarities and differences of the two artists (and friends) as they approach these themes in their work.⁸⁸

James Luna (born 1950), a Luiseño/Digueño artist living on the La Jolla Reservation in San Diego, California, includes performance art in his work because it allows him to discuss Aboriginal difficulties in a way that has not always been accessible to Aboriginal artists. Luna has said that:

⁸⁷ *Rising to the Occasion*, is now being used by the Vancouver Art Gallery as a focal point which links Belmore's subsequent work. According to Augaitis and Ritter, *Rising to the Occasion* is the foundation for three recurring themes in Belmore's work: the varied and omnipresent references to the body, the specificity of place and nature, and the determined response to the socio-political conditions of the moment. Augaitis and Ritter, "Rebecca Belmore: Rising to the Occasion," 9.

⁸⁸ Townsend-Gault, *The Named and Unnamed*, 13.

It is my feeling that artwork in the media of performance and installation offers an opportunity like no other for Indian people to express themselves without compromise in traditional art forms of ceremony, dance, oral traditions and contemporary thought. Within these (non-traditional) spaces one can use a variety of media such as objects, sounds, video, and slides, so that there is no limit in how and what is expressed.⁸⁹

Belmore and Luna utilize a variety of mediums as artists, yet, the use of their own bodies is vital to the expression of their art. Both artists exploit humor as a means of exposing more serious subject matter.

In one of Belmore's most famous performances, *Artifact 671B* (1988, figure 6), she quotes Luna, borrowing from his legendary performance *Artifact Piece* (1987, figure 7). Both artists used their own bodies to comment on the way that museums have identified, classified, and authenticated Aboriginal culture through anthropological means. In *Artifact 671B*, Belmore enhanced Luna's work and took collecting and display further into the political arena.⁹⁰

In conjunction with the Winter Olympics of 1988, the Glenbow Museum launched a major exhibit of Aboriginal art

⁸⁹ Lowe, "The Art of the Unexpected," 14; www.jamesluna.com; Luna, *Red River Crossings*, 44.

⁹⁰Townsend-Gault, "Rebecca Belmore and James Luna on Location at Venice: The Allegorical Indian Redux," 724; Luna, in turn, cites Dutch/California artist Bas Jan Ader, with whom he studied at University of California, Irvine, as one of his most influential teachers. He was particularly affected by Ader's 16mm film, *I'm too Sad to Tell You*, which can be viewed at a web-site run by his wife, www.basjanader.com. Ader disappeared at sea in 1975.

and artifacts (some that had just been returned to Canada from Europe) titled, *The Spirit Sings*; contemporary artists were excluded from the exhibit. The corporate sponsor for this exhibition was Shell Oil Company that had been awarded drilling rights by the government of Alberta on lands claimed by the Lubicon Cree.⁹¹ Belmore placed herself as *Artifact 671B* in the wintry weather of Canada on January 12, 1988, as an act of protest against the Glenbow Museum's practice of exclusion of Aboriginal artists and Shell Oil Company's violation of Lubicon Cree rights. Belmore is seen wrapped in a blanket sporting the shell symbol on her chest, surrounded by fellow protestors. The *671B* museum label number in front that identifies her was also the code used by the Liquor Control Board of Ontario for a cheap red wine.⁹² This directly refers to the alcohol problem faced by many First Nations people due to the displacement and marginalization they have suffered through colonialism. It can also be seen as the way that Aboriginal people have been perceived and treated; their value has been no more than that of cheap wine. It also accentuates another worry of Belmore's which is the rape of the land and land theft.

⁹¹Ibid; see also Townsend-Gault, "Having Voices and Using Them," 66. The exhibit was also called *The Spirit Sinks or The Spirit Sighs* by Aboriginal people protesting the exhibit.

⁹² Ibid, 66.

This refers back to Smith's definition of abuse of land as a form of rape, and it becomes a recurring theme in Belmore's work.

The notion of identifying herself as the "artifact" is rooted in humor. Belmore says that:

And a lot of the time, the work I'm doing has a serious message somewhere in it but there's a lot of humor. I think I use it as a tool to get people to feel comfortable, to not be afraid. So, it's a sneaky way, I think, of bringing people with me and allowing them to come in. and laughing at ourselves - 'cause I think as Native people, to laugh at ourselves has been a source of strength because when things get really bad at least you can laugh about it. I guess it's a healing thing, the humor. Definitely. ...And the humor works-the way I think it works-is that what I am trying to say to people is, "This is funny. Let's laugh! This is really stupid. This is quite silly. These stereotypes are really, really silly, aren't they?" I think I'm using it as a way to make people laugh, but I have something serious to say as well 'cause it's not all funny, I'm not just trying to make people laugh, I'm trying to make them think....Taking the stereotypes and reworking them is what I do a lot.⁹³

Rising to the Occasion is more humorous; however, *671B* does not have the same effect, especially once the viewer is made aware of the reference to *671B* and the illegal drilling oil on Lubicon Cree land.

James Luna's humorous influence and methodology are evident in Belmore's work. Luna explored these topics in *Artifact Piece*. While both artists employ humor in their

⁹³ Belmore, "Seriously Speaking," 146-147.

subject matter and method, including exploiting their own bodies as the site of display, the underlying message is serious. Luna explained his use of humor and said:

My appeal for humor in my work comes from Indian culture, where humor can be a form of knowledge, critical thought, and perhaps to just ease the pain. I think we Indians live in worlds filled with irony and I want to relate that in my works.⁹⁴

In *Artifact Piece*, Luna placed himself in a museum case filled with sand. Luna was unclothed except for a breechclout. He then surrounded himself with labeled objects and labels which identified scarring on his body.

Paul Chaat-Smith writes:

One label read: "Having been married less than two years, the sharing of emotional scars from alcoholic family backgrounds was cause for fears of giving, communicating and mistrust. Skin callous on ring finger remains, along with assorted painful and happy memories." Another read: "Drunk beyond the point of being able to defend himself, he was jumped by people from another reservation. After being knocked down, he was kicked in the face and upper body. Saved by an old man he awoke with a swollen face covered with dried blood. Thereafter, he made it a point not to be as trusting among relatives and other Indians." A nearby case showed visitors cultural relics belonging to the Indian...favorite books (Kerouac and Ginsberg) and music (Sex Pistols, Hank Williams).⁹⁵

Another case contained traditional objects, medicine and ritual items similar to those found in natural history

⁹⁴ Townsend-Gault, "James Luna," *In Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the Gallery of Canada*, 192; quoted from artist's statement for *Encuentro: Invasion of the Americas and the Making of the Mestizo*, n.p.

⁹⁵Chaats Smith, "Luna Remembers," 34; González, *Subject To Display*, 38.

museums.⁹⁶ An assortment of shoes was on display that González writes, "implied a missing presence." Other vitrines described by González contained Luna's personal belongings such as his driver's license, diplomas, and children's toys, including a small figurine of a Franciscan monk with his arm around a Native American child, perhaps the most chilling object.⁹⁷ This could be a reference to the way that Aboriginal children were, in some cases, forcibly taken from their homes to be educated in missionary schools and the sexual abuse that Aboriginal children often suffered at the hands of those who were supposed to protect and educate them.⁹⁸ It also deals with the way that Aboriginal religious practice and language were systematically being destroyed by these schools.

The performance also questioned who was being examined. Was the audience gazing at Luna or was Luna assessing museum goers?⁹⁹ Smith credits Luna with forever changing the art world with *Artifact Piece* by making other Native artists look at their work as obsolete and timid.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ González, *Subject to Display*, 38; González provides a more detailed description of contents here.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 40.

⁹⁸ For an introduction to this phenomenon see, Knowles, "The Heart of Its Women: Rape, (Residential Schools), and Re-membering," 136-151.

⁹⁹ Townsend-Gault, "Ritualizing Ritual's Ritual," 54-55; Fisher, "In Search of the "Inauthentic": Disturbing Signs in Contemporary Native American Art," 48.

¹⁰⁰ Chaat Smith, 35.

There are several issues being critiqued by Luna: the treatment of Aboriginal people past and present by the museum world and society at large; the way that Native Americans have been romanticized and imbued with spirituality that no one could possibly live up to; and an appraisal of the realities faced by Native Americans that include poverty, drugs, gangs, Indian-on-Indian violence, alcoholism and diabetes. Americans (and Canadians in the case of Belmore's work) do not want to see their Aboriginal people in this light. Alcohol and sugar were introduced to Aboriginal people by colonizers who then dispossessed Aboriginal people from their lands. The governments of Canada and the United States do not want to readily admit to these inequities and injustices. Aboriginal people do not want to talk about these issues of alcoholism, poverty, Indian-on-Indian violence, drugs, gangs and diabetes either and Luna is often criticized for being "dark and depressing" in his depictions of Native American life. Luna, however, is undisturbed by this.

In an interview with Paul Chaat Smith and Truman Lowe, Luna said that he "wanted to portray Native American life truthfully, because the first step to recovery is talking

about it."¹⁰¹ In depicting "life on the La Jolla reservation truthfully," Luna says that "it is not all pretty."¹⁰² Rather than "criticizing a condition," he says that he is "in the condition."¹⁰³ In the most poignant description of Luna's work, Paul Chaat Smith writes that "Luna watches and remembers."¹⁰⁴ The ritual enacted in Luna's *Artifact Piece* and Belmore's *671B*, according to Townsend-Gault, is "the reclamation of their rights to self-representation."¹⁰⁵ While Townsend-Gault may be correct, it is much more than that; it is this act of remembrance that transforms the performer and the viewer. Luna also works with the "timeless present." He displays himself as dead, yet he is alive. He is a relic from the past, yet he is a contemporary man as verified by his memorabilia. That the past treatment of Aboriginal people has impinged upon his present circumstances is indicated. Contested histories are at the fore of Luna's work and the art of Belmore.

¹⁰¹ Video recorded interview in preparation for Luna's performance *Emendatio* for the 51st Venice Biennale and sponsored by the Smithsonian and filmed at the Smithsonian. Truman Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith were curators, 2005; see also Luna's "I Always wanted to be an American Indian," 19-27. It is also important to note that Luna has an MS in counseling from San Diego State University.

¹⁰² Chaat-Smith, "Luna Remembers," in *James Luna: Emendatio*, 44.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Townsend-Gault, "Ritualizing Ritual's Ritual," 55.

The lie that Belmore and Luna seek to expose about conquest and consequences can best be expressed by the words of Jimmie Durham who said that:

The Master Narrative of the United States proclaims that there were no Indians here, just wilderness. Then that the Indians were savages in need of the United States. Then that the Indians all died, unfortunately. Then, that the Indians still alive are (a) basically happy with the situation and (b) not the "real" Indians. Then most importantly, that that is the complete story.¹⁰⁶

This "Master Narrative" produced what Paul Chaat Smith calls a "selective state of amnesia."¹⁰⁷ When artists such as Belmore and Luna remind viewers of the truth, they run the risk of falling into the trap of making themselves "hostage to identity politics."¹⁰⁸ They also become known as "troublemakers" or "truth-tellers." With no desire to acquiesce and play the role of docile, romanticized or assimilated Indians, Belmore and Luna "avoid the trap by making work about and through them."¹⁰⁹

Humor is the key in Luna's performance and it was this that Belmore tapped into in her work. Because humor is disarming, more can be said to the artist's target

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 55.

¹⁰⁷ Chaat-Smith, "Luna Remembers," in *James Luna: Emendatio*, 28.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. "This is the challenge facing Indian conceptual artists: being outside the official narratives, to even assert the relevance of an Indian past and present makes, one hostage to identity politics, multiculturalism and other narrow and suspect agendas, the very assertion makes one an amateur, a poseur, a primitive." see also Townsend-Gault, "Belmore and Luna on Location," *Art History*, 724-25

¹⁰⁹ Townsend-Gault, 724-25.

audience. Both artists claim to make work for an Indigenous audience but acknowledge that it is non-Native viewers who are often in attendance. The profound educational experience that such performances provide can be more influential than protests. While protests are valid, when executed by Aboriginal people they have tended to (unfairly) reinforce the stereotype of the savage out-of-control Indian. The genius of *The Artifact Piece, Rising to the Occasion*, and *Artifact 647B* is that they sneak in politically charged content. Belmore also made use of this technique in *Wild* (2001, figure 8).

Wild was a performance piece that was part of the exhibition *House Guests: The Grange 1817 To Today* (2001). In *The Grange*, however, it is the stereotype of the oversexed female Native that Belmore confronts. *The Grange* is a Georgian manor built by the Boulton family between 1817 and 1820 in Ontario, Canada. The last owner of the house, Harriette Boulton Smith, designated it to be used as a fine art gallery, in 1910.¹¹⁰ Legend has it that while the first Mrs. Boulton was recuperating from the birth of her sixth child, an Aboriginal man wandered into the house, went up the stairs and into the master bedroom where he

¹¹⁰ For more on the history of the Grange, see, Bradley and Mackay, *House Guests: The Grange 1817 to Today*, 11-74.

proclaimed, "Pretty squaw, pretty papoose," then left.¹¹¹

When Belmore learned of this story, it provided the inspiration for *Wild*. In *Wild*, Belmore inhabited the master bedroom, specifically the four poster master bed. Belmore designed a red coverlet with rows of long black hair sewn onto it. The canopy of the four poster bed was adorned with beaver pelts and more long black hair. The long black hair was eerie and is reminiscent of collecting practices and scalps; in this case, perhaps, it is women who are being collected. Because Belmore was lying beneath the sheets naked, the performance was overtly sexual. People wandered in and out of the exhibition where Belmore was mistaken as a wax figure more than once.¹¹² What is so startling about this Victorian bedroom setting is the fact that an Aboriginal woman would not have inhabited this space nor would she have been a guest. Belmore also seems to be playing with the notion of the wild savage versus the civilized white man. Kathleen Ritter writes that she would have been "an unexpected, historically unwelcome guest."¹¹³

Belmore said:

To occupy this bed of history and to have viewers confronted by my presence was interesting. The most extreme reaction to the work was for people to enter

¹¹¹ Ibid, 11-74; Milroy, "At home on the Grange," R9.

¹¹² Bradley, "Rebecca Belmore: Art and the Object of Performance, 48.

¹¹³ Ritter, 56.

and observe the "historic beauty" of the room, discussing all the objects in the rest of the room, while ignoring me in the bed. I then thought that my occupation of the bed worked because it illustrated a denial and an inability to accept the Aboriginal female body in that narrative.¹¹⁴

The unmistakable fact is that Belmore did occupy the space. The subtitle to this work could be, *What a Difference One Hundred Years Makes*. The passage of time allowed Belmore to speak through the work. The crucial element is the juxtaposition between historical, political, racial and gender beliefs that continue today. Belmore simultaneously reclaims the space and rejects the ideology of exclusion.

Like her predecessors Schneeman and Mendieta, Belmore empowers women and rejects patriarchal ideology. All of the artists mentioned used the actions of their bodies to express their discontent with the status quo. Mendieta was living in exile away from her country. Luna and Belmore are exiled metaphorically while living in their homeland. Their mutual emphasis is on the restoration of dignity and identity that was destroyed as the result of colonialism.

¹¹⁴ Ritter, 56; a conversation with Belmore.

Chapter 3

Erasing Acts of Colonial Erasure

The earliest forms of "identity theft" were byproducts of colonization that took place in land theft, broken treaties that were meant to protect the newly dispossessed, and governmental boarding schools that were often run by religious organizations intent on "getting the Indian out of the Indian."¹¹⁵ Belmore ventured into this territory in *Artifact 671B* by protesting oil drilling by Shell Oil Company on lands held by the Lubicon Cree. In *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother* (July 27, 1991, Banff, Alberta) (figure 9) she launched an all-out protest regarding land issues. In *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother*, Belmore designed a giant

¹¹⁵ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 151-175. Chapter 8 of Barman's book, "Disregard of Native Peoples 1858-1945," illustrates the disparity between beliefs of Indigenous peoples and Europeans regarding land use. Indigenous people were seen as inferior. They did not cultivate the land like Europeans did, therefore the Europeans believed they did not own it and had no right to it. The right of ownership according to European ideals should go to civilized, Christian nations. Also they believed that the Indian ways of life were dangerous to the Indians themselves, specifically the practice of potlatch, 155-160. First Nations people focused on the well-being of the tribe rather than the individual, which was in opposition to European beliefs. The idea of the vanishing Indian was popular, and effects of European infectious diseases made this seem inevitable. The Indian Acts of 1869 which were revised in 1880 made Indian peoples the responsibility of the Canadian federal government. A Department of Indian Affairs was created mostly, according to Barman, to ensure that the natives did not challenge the dominant society. The Indian agent was the last person people went to for help. Missionaries played a major role in preventing the younger generation from learning the "old ways," which included religion, language and culture, 161.

two-meter wide megaphone that was made out of wood.¹¹⁶

While both performances tackle similar concerns, the use of the human voice conceptually, is different. Only one human voice could utilize the megaphone at any given time. One single voice echoing across the landscape created a powerful impact. The impetus for this work was directly related to the Oka crisis which began on March 11, 1990 and ended on September 26, 1990.

The Oka crisis began when the Mohawk people from the Kanesatake reserve protested the city of Oka's and then Mayor Jean Ouellette's plans to add nine holes to an already existing nine-hole golf course. This addition would encroach on sacred Mohawk burial grounds, and many Mohawks were already feeling anger toward the existing golf course that they claimed was built illegally with the aid of a trumped-up bill passed in 1959.¹¹⁷ Protests grew violent

¹¹⁶ Belmore did not construct the megaphone herself but had Banff carpenter Mimo Maeola supervise the building of the megaphone along with carpenter Bob Knowlden. This project was conceived of during a 1991 residency at the Banff Centre and commissioned by the Walter Phillips Gallery. Her idea in this situation centered on her desire to be an object creator and "to fulfill her ambition to foster a genuine interactivity between artist and community." See O'Rourke, 29. See also, Augaitis, "Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-Mowan: Speaking to Their Mother: Daina Augaitis and Rebecca Belmore in Conversation," 41.

¹¹⁷ For more information and footage of actual events see the Canadian National Broadcasting Archives, http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/civil_unrest/topics/99/. The footage and radio broadcasts are chilling and graphic. Numerous non-Aboriginal people supported the Mohawks, however, racism abounded. The non-Aboriginal people of Chateauguay burned effigies of Aboriginal people, threw stones at them, and set up road blocks so that they could not get supplies back to

with accusations flying on both sides. International attention was drawn to the plight of First Nations people and Native land claims in an unprecedented way. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation depicted the Mohawks as radicals and ended broadcasts numerous times with the statement, "All this over a golf course." In the end, the golf course plans were abandoned, however the land was purchased by the government and not given back to the Mohawks.

Oka was a pivotal moment for Belmore as a First Nations woman who saw the Canadian government use military might against what began as a peaceful protest. Belmore said that "It shattered the notion of Canada as a peaceful, peacekeeping country."¹¹⁸ Inviting thirteen First Nations men and women to speak to the land, Belmore took the megaphone across Canada where First Nations people could address their concerns directly to the earth. *Ayum-ee-*

their people. One anonymous Mohawk woman who was interviewed by a reporter said that Mohawks saw the land as their mother. She likened the desecration of the land and sacred burial ground by bulldozers to rape. She said, "You would not let anyone rape your mother. That is what we are doing here." Sadly, a non-Aboriginal police officer died from a gunshot wound that was said to have been fired from the Mohawk group. Some of the First Nations protestors claim to have heard the police radios calling for help because they had accidentally shot one of their own. See also, Frideres, *Native Peoples in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts*, entire book, for information about issues regarding history, identity, land claims, treaties, and governmental policy. Although this book was published in 1988, there is a wealth of information about governmental actions that would fuel the anger that led to events such as Oka.

¹¹⁸ Augaitis, 41.

aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother was performed at numerous sites around Canada including Parliament Hill in Ottawa.¹¹⁹ The image of radical, "angry Indians" as presented by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation infuriated Belmore, and she wanted to protest in a peaceful manner. First Nations tribes were also deeply offended by the representations they saw highlighted by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Fear of being cast as wild, angry renegades had a silencing effect.

Belmore seemed to be playing with the stereotype of the savage Indian in this performance as much as she was addressing political issues over land theft and identity as tied to land. When Aboriginal people seek to voice an injustice, they are depicted as "out of hand." This notion was exploited by the founding fathers in the United States as discussed by Phillip Deloria in *Playing Indian*. Specifically addressing the *Boston Tea Party*, Deloria explains how loyal British subjects could not commit acts against the monarchy; however, dressed as "savage Indians" they could execute violent deeds of opposition that allowed

¹¹⁹ For more information on who spoke, what was said, and where the megaphone was taken see, Augaitis, 43-45 and Youngman, "The Savage Civilian," 36-39.

them to maintain the status quo.¹²⁰ In other words, they were protected by the masquerade. Throughout history there have been justifications for conquest. The projection of Aboriginal people as barbaric in nature has been an overused yet convenient trope. In the Oka incident, the Mohawks were viewed as the aggressors creating an uprising. The police and military were simply doing their jobs. Belmore created a "legitimate," peaceful means for protest that dispelled this myth of vicious savage. Cognizant of the negative impact of these stereotypes, Belmore wanted First Nations people to "see protest as a positive action, as a necessary thing in our struggle to better our lives and to be healthier people...I wanted to say that to speak your own truth is a good thing."¹²¹ The megaphone allowed the voices of the speakers to travel through sound waves farther than they would have without its use. The irony of this device was that because of its construction "it does not make the voice much louder but it does shoot the voice much further so it finds an echo."¹²² The initial

¹²⁰ Detailed information about how this occurred throughout history can be found in Deloria, *Playing Indian*, Introduction, 1-9 and Chapter One, "Patriotic Indians and Identities of Revolution," 10-37. After the War for Independence, many loyal subjects of the monarchy fled to Canada. The notion of Kingdom and ownership of the land and people under which Canada operates, is at the heart of Belmore's protests.

¹²¹ O'Rourke, 29.

¹²² Ibid. Belmore also said that when the performance took place in open spaces, such as Banff National Park, the echo was more pronounced.

performance took place in Banff National Park in 1991. The traveling performance began in 1992 in Ottawa on Parliament Hill. Belmore said:

We started the 1992 tour of the work in Ottawa on Parliament Hill where the voice echoed off the American embassy that was located across the street. It made me think about the border between the two countries and how it divides many reserve communities located in its midst. It was significant to begin in the nation's capital, during a time when constitutional talks were well under way. In fact, during our gathering, two politicians climbed the steps and had to walk by the megaphone. I invited both to speak by asking them if they would like to speak to our Mother, gesturing toward and meaning the earth. One of the politicians, Joe Clark, who was the constitutional minister at the time, complied. The other political figure, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, declined. It was important to start our tour on the front steps of Parliament, it gave the beginning of our journey a hard edge.¹²³

Two senior politicians were presented with an incredible opportunity to mend the rift between First Nations people

¹²³ Augaitis, 45. Subsequent performances had unusual occurrences. The following information is found in Augaitis, 46. At a performance on Mount McKay in Thunder Bay, a baby was placed before the megaphone. Upon uttering a sound, the baby, recognizing its own voice, proceeded to produce more sounds. The other incident that day was the death of hiker which caused Belmore to reconsider the continuation of the performances. She was encouraged to proceed as it was not the fault of the performance. In Winnipeg, the performance was "heckled by angry passer-bys." It took place in a downtown park opposite St. Boniface Cathedral "where Louis Riel, a Métis leader, was accused of and executed for high treason," and buried. It reminded Belmore of Riel's words, "My people will sleep for one hundred years and when they awake, it will be the artists who give them back their spirit." Finally, in a performance at Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, organized by Cree elders, the megaphone was used to protest logging on Cree land. CBS television magazine, program W5 was present and, rather than addressing the media or television cameras directly, the elders spoke through the megaphone and to the land. Belmore saw this as a subversive act for which the megaphone was intended.

and the government; only one responded. Then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's failure to speak underscored Belmore's political rationale. Belmore's chief interest was to provide a venue for Aboriginal people to speak; however, in what has become her trademark of inclusion, everyone was invited to speak. Dialogue is at the forefront of all Belmore's work. Two summers after the Oka crisis, she installed the megaphone piece at the Kanesatake reserve for their pow-wow, at the very place where the standoff started. The megaphone, which is a sculptural object by itself, had come to symbolize voices that cannot and will not be silenced.

Mawu-che-hitoowin: A Gathering of People for any Purpose (1992, figure 10) was an installation piece in which Belmore asked women from the Thunder Bay area to talk about their experiences as First Nations women. The installation consisted of a variety of chairs set up in a circle on what appeared to be a piece of plywood decorated to mimic linoleum or a living room carpet. Earphones were placed on each chair. The viewer could then walk into the space, sit on a chair, place the earphones over their ears and listen to the various stories told by these women. There is a sense of immediacy and intimacy in this work,

particularly given the fact that each woman who spoke provided the chair on which she sat to be used in the installation.¹²⁴

In many interviews Belmore honors the women in her family, particularly her grandmother. According to Belmore, her grandmother was an earthy woman who lived off the land as a trapper and fisherwomen. She refused to learn the English language.¹²⁵ Belmore's mother, on the other hand, was concerned that her children be able to function in a contemporary society that was diametrically opposed to the way that she (her mother) had been raised. A contributing factor was her older sons' experiences in Catholic boarding schools. When they spoke the Anishinabe language, they were punished. Because these women were held in contempt by the dominant culture they had little or no recourse if they wished to address these inequities.

Making women the focal point of such an installation is conceptually momentous given the treatment of Aboriginal women as outlined by Barman. Barman writes that "by the mid-nineteenth century Europeans perceived all female

¹²⁴ Burgess, "The Imagined Boundaries of Rebecca Belmore," 18.

¹²⁵ See video of Belmore at an artist talk she gave on March 24, 2007 sponsored by the Brooklyn Museum of Art in conjunction with exhibition, *Global Feminisms Remix*, which ran from August 3, 2007 to February 3, 2008. http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/global_feminist/artist.

sexual autonomy to be illicit, especially if it occurred in the public spheres, considered exclusively male.”¹²⁶ Since many First Nations women were trappers, fisherwomen, and traders they infringed on male, European new-comers who were also trappers, fisherman, and traders. The desire to subdue or tame these women was underway. Because many of these women lost their economic autonomy as the result of the gold rush, they were forced into prostitution.¹²⁷ Barman writes that, by 1871 when British Columbia became a province of Canada, Aboriginal women had been wholly sexualized.¹²⁸ She goes on to explain that men in power could speak candidly of the problem of prostitution (or what was concubinage) and the need to restrain its growth.¹²⁹

While Barman writes that “In referring to men in power, I do not mean to suggest that non-Aboriginal women were completely absent from the discourse but I do contend that at least in British Columbia their voices were muted compared to those of men.”¹³⁰ This statement implies that

¹²⁶ Barman, 241. The domestic or private sphere involved housekeeping and the care of children which was considered the realm of women. The public sphere involved “men’s work” in which women were not allowed to participate.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 244- 249.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 249.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

non-Aboriginal women had little or no voice during this time. Aboriginal women who were already looked upon with disdain would have no opportunity or right to protest their treatment. This installation pays tribute to these women and acknowledges the hard choices they had to make in order to survive, to ensure that their children could adapt and flourish and the ways in which their voices had been silenced on numerous levels.

At the previously mentioned public forum on February 17, 2009 at the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, Belmore presented two video clips, *Making Always War* (2008, figure 11) and *Victorious* (2008, figure 12). Belmore said that she was invited to discuss the nature of performance art with a group of graduate students and decided to show them what performance was rather than talk about what it was. *Making Always War* was created to comment on the way in which Aboriginal children were forced to leave their families and attend missionary boarding schools in Canada. Belmore said that she was specifically citing Catholic schools and the way that this "education" was an attempt to wipe out all memory of tribal culture, religion and language. She also said that she was questioning what was going on in Iraq. Might it be another attempt at

assimilation? The clip for *Making Always War* began with Belmore driving up to a cement pedestal in her truck with pow-wow music coming from the music system in the truck. She spread dirt from a bucket across a low-rise concrete pedestal and subsequently placed a beam of wood across the concrete pedestal with the help of an assistant. She returned to the truck and brought back with her a sack of nails, hammer, and six military style combat jackets. Belmore then began to rip the buttoned jackets apart and nailed the remnants onto the beam until it was completely covered. With the help of an assistant she raised the beam, proceeded to her truck, backed up to the installation, paused briefly, then drove away with pow-wow music playing in the background.

Belmore did not delve into the meaning or what she intended in the presentation, however, the raised timber could be quoting Northwest Coast totem poles that signified clan and, therefore, identity and symbols of power. The performance read to many in attendance as a monument to the indignities suffered by the aboriginal recipients of a forced boarding school education. These schools were run in a militaristic manner; therefore, the combat jackets seem to simultaneously comment on this fact and on an attitude

that is an act of resistance on the part of Aboriginal people who maintain the stance of a contemporary warrior.¹³¹ Pow-wow music blaring in the background reinforced themes of war, ceremony, remembrance and restoration.¹³²

The second video clip, *Victorious*, was a reference to an apology issued by the Prime Minister of Canada on June 11, 2008 to First Nations people, especially those who had suffered under the tutelage of boarding schools.¹³³ This incident led Belmore to her own musings, "What if conquest had not happened and we had our own queen?" In the video, an Aboriginal woman with a feathered crown around her head holds a rattle-like scepter. Blaring in the background is a pompous ceremonial recording of a choir singing *God Save*

¹³¹ I cannot be absolutely sure of Belmore's intention as she did not use those words to describe the meaning of the jackets or the raising of the salvaged piece of lumber; this is my conjecture. In *Rising to the Occasion, 2008*, Marcia Crosby says that it is a direct reference to Desert Storm, p. 87; however, Belmore only made passing reference to this and focused more on the boarding school dilemma during the IAIA panel discussion. In an artist statement for this work Belmore wrote that: "Working for forty-five minutes, using a salvaged piece of west coast timber, buckets of sand from nearby Spanish Banks, six Desert Storm shirts purchased from an army surplus store, a hammer, some nails, and the sound of pow-wow music emanating from my truck- I set out to make, to build, to destroy, and to raise - my thoughts about war. Driving nails through the camouflage fabric and into what used to be a majestic tree - I assaulted, soothed and shaped a personal version of a memorial pole with the setting sun and then working in the headlights of my own vehicle... making, making always war." http://www.acad.ab.ca/wh_2009_02_ikg_rb_atat.html (accessed April 26, 2010).

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Wilmer says on page two of his introduction in *Native American Performance and Representation* that, "It is significant that during 2008, the prime minister of Canada apologized officially to the First Nations for their treatment in the past and particularly for the residential schools."

the Queen. Piles of newspaper are strewn about the floor as are buckets of honey. Using a photo replica of Queen Victoria on her throne as a reference, Belmore covers her "Native" queen with newspaper. She continually consults her photo as she creates a paper maché dress with newspaper and honey. The culmination of the performance is the creation of sash that folds over the Aboriginal queen's left shoulder to her right hip, just like the sash on Queen Victoria in the photo. A video screen hanging in the background changes with various scenes from nature, until the end, when the queen is finally presented and a vat of honey appears on the screen behind her. In both videos Belmore addresses identity, colonization, acts of resistance and ritual which restores the balance.¹³⁴ Resistance is represented on a number of levels in these two works. The first aspect of resistance is telling the story. The second is even imagining Canada without British influences. It is the account imbued with truth that resists assimilation and negation of culture. The ritual was enacted through the raising of the totem pole and the playing of pow-wow music, each a vital aspect of ceremony.

¹³⁴ At the IAIA colloquium, Bonnie Devine said that the "ritual is performed to restore the balance."

Both signify an Aboriginal presence that refuses suppression.

The power in *Mawu-che-hitoowin: A Gathering of People for any Purpose* resides in its subtlety. The impact of the empty chairs denotes a commanding presence that is filled not only by the women who shared their experiences but also by the families they represent. The sheer physicality that Belmore exhibits in *Making Always War* communicates the anger and the senselessness of the violence inflicted on Aboriginal children in boarding schools and the vow to never let it happen again. Belmore's violent hammering conveys a certain sense of helplessness in which she seems to question when the damaging practices such as war, colonialism, and pointless loss of human life will end.

Victorious seems to be a parody of all things British, from the music of *God Save the Queen* to Belmore's thoughtful, fluid movements which make viewers wonder if she is portraying the queen correctly. The use of newspaper and honey is an interesting choice. Newspapers are emblems of communication, specifically daily happenings locally and worldwide. Does the honey hold the newspapers together or does it sweeten the bitter knowledge that, in fact, the British still rule? Or better yet, does the satire suggest

that Belmore does not care, because she has reclaimed Canada for Indigenous people, through the performance? Is the use of such materials directly related to paper maché, which is a popular medium for schoolchildren (because this performance is Belmore's reaction to the apology of the Prime Minister)? There is also the symbolism of the worker bee quietly functioning in the background, producing honey. Perhaps the worker bee becomes an iconographic element for Aboriginal people, who continue to operate in the background productively, despite all efforts by the dominant culture to subdue them.

This particular work seems to be less successful than the others because it reinforces stereotypes. When Belmore holds up the photograph of Queen Elizabeth to the audience in the final action, she seems exhausted by the task. She also seems to be asking for approval, "Did I get it right?" There is a feeling of futility in this work that is noticeably absent in the other performances discussed here.¹³⁵ It is also possible, that Belmore, herself

¹³⁵ Belmore performed this work again in April, 2009, for the BC Scene and The Vancouver Gallery Art Hop. To view a brief clip of the opening night performance of this work, see www.creativetechnology.org/video/victorious-rebecca-belmore (accessed April 26, 2010). This performance seems to have been wildly successful as evidenced by the cheers coming from the audience.

exemplifies the worker bee, continuously laboring in the process of transformation from injustice to justice.

Victorious revisits *Rising to the Occasion*

thematically. Both of these performances represent efforts to re-work the past and the idea of timelessness to which Mohler refers. Belmore's insistence on the right to self representation through the reclamation of the decolonized self is also manifested in *Victorious*. Humor is at the forefront of both works in that they confront the audacity and arrogance of beliefs and systems that allow one culture and race to dominate and control another. Both performances are outright rejections of colonialism.

Chapter 4

Colonial Violence Then and Now: Memory and Healing

In the course of the conquest of the Americas, women suffered from a brutal kind of treatment. Abduction and rape were frequent occurrences. Richard Trexler points out that men were also raped during conquest in the Near East, but seldom lived to tell the tale.¹³⁶ Women were forced to carry the memory in their bodies, sometimes bearing children as a result; almost always they were forced into some form of servitude. Genocide is perhaps the most atrocious form of colonial violence. Contemporary Aboriginal women still feel the reverberating effect of these attitudes. The treatment of women circulates around what this author calls the Malinche/Pocahontas/Sacajawea syndrome. These women came from different locales and time periods. All three women endured abduction or slavery, and all served as interpreters for non-Natives and as

¹³⁶ Trexler, 13, Chapters one and two; Lerner, 76-100. Although Lerner's work focused on the fate of the losing side in the Near East, the point that Trexler and Lerner make is that the conquered peoples are gendered as female and therefore dependent upon the victors. His point is that it continued to happen in situations involving one nation conquering another and was used as a method of degradation and control. See also Powers, *Women in the Crucible of Conquest: The Gendered Genesis of Spanish American Society, 1500-1600*, 73. Powers writes of the colonial practice of abduction and gifting which were used by the Spanish to cement relationships; the Aztecs also practiced this. It was not uncommon for Spaniards to pass through villages and take young women to be used as menial servants and sexual slaves.

concubines/wives to the conquering men.¹³⁷ The only voices that are silent in their stories are their own.

¹³⁷ Malinche was a slave at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards in February of 1519 into what is now Mexico. While no one is sure of her date of birth or death, she first appears in the memoir of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain*, 82. Díaz began writing his memoir's at age 76 to 84. The exact date of publication varies from 1568 to 1575. She and nineteen other women were "gifted" to the Spaniards, and Diaz elaborates on this event and speaks highly of Malinche, who later is known as Doña Marina. Díaz also mentions that Malinche was the daughter of a cacique who was sold into slavery by her mother. When her father died, her mother remarried and wanted the son from that marriage to inherit what was supposed to be Malinche's inheritance. Malinche became the interpreter and eventually the mistress of Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés. She was not an Aztec Indian, yet later during the first revolution of 1821 in Mexico, she acquired the title of traitor and whore. She became known as the "Mexican Eve" because she "betrayed her people by acting as an interpreter" and did not resist the intruders. Of course this was conveniently retold by those who were not present and assumed that she had a choice. The choice she had was to stay alive or kill herself to protect her honor. She chose to stay alive. Pocahontas, who is thought to have been born around 1595, is the most well-known Indian princess in American culture. The notion of the Indian princess is an overblown, overused invention that began before Pocahontas but is most closely associated with her purported rescue of John Smith in 1607. Romantic myths were then constructed around Pocahontas and women like her because of the alliances they made with white males. Rayna Green explains (regarding Pocahontas and Sacajawea) "both the Indian woman's nobility as a Princess and her savagery as a Squaw are defined in terms of her relationship with male figures. If she wishes to be called Princess, she must save or give aid to white men;" Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: the Image of Indian Women in American Culture," 703. For more on the Indian princess construct see, Valaskakis, "Sacajawea and Her Sisters: Images and Indians," 11-37. Pocahontas was kidnapped by the English because she was the daughter of chief Powhatan. He refused to meet the demands of the English. She stayed with the English, converted to Christianity and married John Rolfe in 1614. She later bore him a son and died in 1617 in England. Pocahontas fell out of favor with the advent of the American Indian Movement in the seventies. It was during this time that she became known as a traitor because again, like Malinche, she acted as an intermediary and did not return to her people. Sacajawea, born around 1788, was a member of the Shoshone tribe. She was captured by the Hidatsa tribe as a child, who then sold her to a French-Canadian trapper, Toussaint Charbonneau, a notorious rapist and abuser of Native women. Sacajawea is celebrated as the interpreter for the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-1806. There are conflicting reports surrounding her death. One report describes her as dying of fever in 1812, and another from her tribe describes her death as having occurred in 1884. It was also said that she ran away from her abusive husband in 1812 and went on to marry

Biographers have romanticized, glorified or vilified them depending on who is telling the story.¹³⁸ Belmore delves into these histories with precision. *Vigil*, *Fringe*, *Freeze*, and *Blood on the Snow* are the most chilling of her works.

Belmore uses humor to address serious issues; however, she departs from the use of humor more than once. Her most celebrated departure from humor is seen in *Vigil* (2002, figure 13), the video recording of her performance for part of her installation work in *The Named and Unnamed* (2002) at the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery at the University of British Columbia.¹³⁹ *Vigil* is one of Belmore's most provocative and moving performances. The work is based the disappearance of a large number of women from the corner of Gore and Cordova streets in Vancouver, British Columbia, most of them prostitutes and drug addicts, who included

within her tribe. Sacajawea has received better press than Malinche or Pocahontas. Numerous memorials have been erected in her honor. For a full list of these, see Hebard, *Sacajawea: Guide and Interpreter of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 297-303. The information about Malinche, Pocahontas, and Sacajawea is vast. I have provided brief biographies in order to explain how the fate of these women has translated in contemporary society.

¹³⁸ Jimmie Durham discusses this issue in his book, *A Certain Lack of Coherence*, 145. He also created two sculptural installations that illustrate the paradigm of Malinche and Pocahontas. *Shrine* (1988) is dedicated to Pocahontas. *La Malinche: Original Reruns* (1991) is a representation of Malinche.

¹³⁹ This particular image is part of the installation portion of *Vigil* in *The Named and Unnamed* exhibition. Video stills were projected onto a screen which was backed by fifty light bulbs. When *Vigil* was performed, fifty women were known to have been missing.

both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. *Blood on the Snow* (2002, figure 14) part of *The Named and Unnamed*, also speaks about the massacre of three hundred unarmed Sioux, mostly women and children, at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, in December of 1890. Working with photography, installation, sculpture, and performance, Belmore provides documentation of her attempt to "restore the balance." Charlotte Townsend-Gault, who has written extensively about Belmore, interviewed her concerning this particular endeavor. Townsend-Gault discusses the difficulties and potential pitfalls faced by the artist as she approached this project and how she managed to avoid them.

The tendency to romanticize Aboriginal people and continually place them within the context of a "pre-modern, pre-industrial past, before the sacred was expunged" has proven problematic for contemporary Aboriginal people including artists.¹⁴⁰ The expectation then placed on the artist to make these connections to the lost past is daunting. Townsend-Gault asks the question, "Was there ever such a past, or have we left it?"¹⁴¹ According to Townsend-Gault:

¹⁴⁰ Townsend-Gault, *The Named and Unnamed*, pg. 9-11; this was also discussed earlier in relation to Paul Chaat Smith's observations and Jimmie Durham's comments.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

It is invidious to put the onus of such ideology onto one set of installations, or the work of one artist. But the risk might be worth taking anyway, since *The Named and the Unnamed* does not play as a postcolonial accounting, complete with racialised praise and blame, uncritical advocacy, self-chastisement, and smug complicity. It circumvents this terrain, and attempts something more difficult, something even more problematic: the unaccountable.¹⁴²

The significance of this statement lies in the fact that the women Belmore memorialized in *Vigil* were prostitutes, drug addicts, marginalized Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. Her social commentary extends beyond the Aboriginal community and addresses the issue of accountability and good and evil, which implicates society as a whole. It also asks difficult and perhaps unanswerable questions, such as, how did they get there to begin with? What was the source of their despair? How can this be prevented in the future?

In her doctoral thesis, Lara Evans includes media articles and interviews about the disappearances of these women that began twenty years ago. She includes extensive documentation and the fact that "because these women lived on the edge" of "civilized" society, authorities blamed their lifestyle as the reason for their disappearances thereby expiating themselves from active investigation.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Townsend-Gault, *The Named and the Unnamed*, 9-11.

¹⁴³ Evans, *One of These Things is not Like the 'Other': Works by Native Performance Artists, Rebecca Belmore, Greg Hill, and James Luna*, 168. Evans has extensive documentation, from newspaper articles to radio and

Many of the Aboriginal women had left their rural homes in search of work in Vancouver, only to end up alienated from their families and without community support. Their families were embarrassed by their lifestyles and felt disempowered in their efforts to help their kin.

Prostitute Kim Kirton, who worked with a partner, escaped from an encounter with Robert Pickton (the alleged serial killer); her partner did not.¹⁴⁴ In a television interview, Kirton told reporter Deborah Feldman that Pickton told her and her partner that he could kill them and would never get caught because nobody would miss them because of their occupation.¹⁴⁵ Even after this televised interview, authorities were slow to act. With this in mind Belmore wanted to "speak about the unspeakable and give voice to the voiceless."¹⁴⁶ It is also important to note here that, as Belmore begins what is essentially a ritual in her art, she consults her Objivay elders as a source for

television interviews and reports. No other writings of this incident that I have seen include such exhaustive documentation; therefore, I relied heavily on her information as well as going back to the original works cited in her thesis. See also Canadian Broadcasting website: www.cbc.ca/news/background/pickton/.

¹⁴⁴ Evans, *One of These Things is not Like the 'Other': Works by Native Performance artists, Rebecca Belmore, Greg Hill and James Luna*, 168.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 71; Crosby, "Humble Materials and Powerful Signs: Remembering the Suffering of Others," in *Rebecca Belmore: Rising to the Occasion*, 80. Of the sixty-five women officially listed, more than one third are of Aboriginal descent, a high percentage given the fact that Aboriginal people make up only 1% of the population of Vancouver.

¹⁴⁶ Townsend-Gault, *The Named and Unnamed*, 18.

her history and as teachers of what she needs to know to make her art.¹⁴⁷ She is also warned by her elders about what she can include in public discourse and what she must withhold.¹⁴⁸

Belmore does not like her work to be spoken of as spiritual and barely tolerates the use of the word ritual to describe her performances.¹⁴⁹ To Belmore the use of the concept of spirituality cheapens what she is doing and relegates it to a New Age position that is patronizing.¹⁵⁰ It is a form of racism which places all Aboriginal cultures within the realm of the natural world and naturally spiritual.¹⁵¹ The appropriation of Aboriginal culture and religion which has been particularly rampant in New Age is another form of rape as defined by Smith.¹⁵² New Age also wants everyone to feel good and takes no responsibility in regard to the damaging effects of stealing cultural practices. In *Vigil*, Belmore did not want the audience to feel good. She was stirring up emotions that could lead to action.

¹⁴⁷ Townsend-Gault, "Ritualizing Ritual's Ritual," 56.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 57.

¹⁴⁹ Laurence, "Racing Against History: The Art of Rebecca Belmore," 43.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Smith, 1-6.

Vigil, which took place on June 23, 2002, begins with Belmore standing in front of two buckets. Washcloths, votive candles and a pair of pink rubber gloves were removed by Belmore from a couple of grocery bags. After donning the pink gloves, she began scrubbing the sidewalk on the corner of Gore Street and Cordova Street where the women disappeared. She then lit a number of votive candles which seem to represent each victim and invited a man from the audience to continue lighting the candles. Dressed in a t-shirt and jeans with the names of the victims written on her arms, Belmore shouted out the name of each victim. As she named each victim, she ran a long stem-rose, thorns and all, through her mouth, marking the way in which each woman was torn from life. The use of the red rose can be interpreted as a memento mori. Unlike the flower which fades naturally with time, the end of the victims' lives was unnatural. Also the gifting of roses is associated with a highly valued relationship; roses are expensive.

When the process was completed, she put on a red dress, a symbol for ladies of the night, and nailed the dress to a telephone pole. Color is an important aspect of Belmore's performance. In this case the red symbolizes "red cloth as blood, as woman, as race, as violence as torn and

unraveling culture."¹⁵³ She then tore herself away, re-nailed the dress to the pole, repeating the process until there was nothing left of the dress, and she was clad only in her underwear. (She took off her jeans after putting on the dress.) Her physical struggle as she tore the dress away from the telephone pole is difficult to watch. It seems to re-enact the actual struggle that occurred between each woman and her assailant. The last part (seen in the original performance but not available to the viewer of this video on her website) involved Belmore, now clad in jeans and t-shirt, leaning up against a black truck that has been there all the time.¹⁵⁴ James Brown's *It's a Man's Man's World* booms out from the truck's stereo: "This is a man's man's world/but it wouldn't mean nothing, nothing/without a woman or a girl."¹⁵⁵ While most reviewers of Belmore's performance call this ending a re-enactment of what the women who were snatched from life went through, I propose an alternative interpretation. It has usually been seen as unsettling because we know that

¹⁵³ Crosby, "Humble Materials and Powerful Signs: Remembering The Suffering of Others," 79.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 80.

¹⁵⁵ Townsend-Gault, *The Named and Unnamed*, 19. By performing in this manner Townsend-Gault says that "Belmore's work includes all the elements of classic ritual: establishing a bounded, liminal space, cleansing-a purification which puts the protagonist in a vulnerable or dangerous position, their body marked out in some way or identified by special clothing, endurance, repetitive action, release; a closing sequence with the returning to the real."

Belmore in actuality will be safe, unlike the women she has memorialized. Because of the safety implied by Belmore entering the truck and the fact that she knows the driver of the vehicle, it seems that Belmore embodies the spirits of the women she has summoned and released through naming and is restoring their dignity as human beings, worthy of being remembered and, in fact, releasing their spirits, leading them to safety.¹⁵⁶ Belmore gives these women a proper burial, by naming them and acknowledging the crime committed against them and the indifference of society.

Eventually Robert Pickton, a pig farmer, was arrested in February of 2002, and found guilty of killing twenty-six of the women whose remains were found on his property. Crosby comments that many of the missing women's remains have not been found, and since 2002 women are still disappearing. Also, the police had suspected Pickton and his farm as a location of burial since 2001 yet did nothing. Crosby has an alternative interpretation for *Vigil*. She remarks that to view *Vigil* as a memorial or

¹⁵⁶ In a conversation with Rebecca Belmore on June 26, 2009 I proposed this interpretation to her. She said she had not heard that interpretation before, that of setting their spirits free, but, she liked it. To be simply an indictment on society, and it certainly is that, takes away from some of the other aspects. Setting the spirits of these women free is a part of a burial that they never had until this performance/ritual; the fact that some things are too horrible to understand and leave more questions than answers is equally important to this discussion.

funerary ovation is not completely correct. She observes that "*Vigil* is more like a 'funereal testimony' which testifies to a death that was not preceded by a life, and an end to life from which the living can simply go on."¹⁵⁷

Crosby clarifies that:

In the re-enactment of trauma-individual painconfronting collective pain-performance art does not make meaning or create closure. Instead, it invites its audience "to keep watch over the absent meaning that continues to distress us all."¹⁵⁸

This declaration reveals the depth of Belmore's work. She draws attention to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal suffering, yet the complexities are understood by more than one audience because she stirs up latent fears recognized by all participants in the human drama called life.

The historical ramifications of *Vigil* are relevant. As Europeans made their way into First Nations territory after the American Revolution, Aboriginal women were displaced in a particular way. As mentioned earlier, First Nation's women were accustomed to contributing to the vitality of their families through fishing and trapping.

¹⁵⁷ Lawrence Langer, "Memory's Time: Chronology and Duration in Holocaust Testimonies" in *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 14, quoted in Crosby, "Humble Material and Powerful Signs: Remembering the Suffering of Others," *Rebecca Belmore: Rising to the Occasion*, (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008), 80.

¹⁵⁸ Saul Friedländer, "Trauma, Transference and Working Through," *History and Memory* 4 (1992) 39-55, quoted in Crosby "Humble Material and Powerful Signs: Remembering the Suffering of Others," *Rebecca Belmore: Rising to the Occasion* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008), 81.

European traders, fisherman and trappers saw this as an infringement on what was considered men's work. They consistently sought to put these women in their place. Women were increasingly denied access to the freedom of making a living in a manner they were accustomed to as a result of these attitudes. In situations of conquest Indigenous women have been (and still are) used for sexual satisfaction.¹⁵⁹ As long as "colonial women" were unavailable, Indigenous women were fair game, so that non-Aboriginal men could objectify and use them and at the same time label them prostitutes.¹⁶⁰ The negative stereotyping of Indigenous women as over-sexed, devious and therefore unworthy of consideration was so insidious that remnants of this thinking exist today.

Historian Jean Barman began her research of this subject because of her experience in a Vancouver courtroom in July of 1996 where she listened to Catholic Bishop Hubert O'Connor defended himself against charges of "having raped or indecently assaulted four young Aboriginal women three decades earlier."¹⁶¹ Bishop O'Connor's excuses for

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 240.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 237-248.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 237. Two of these incidents took place while O'Connor was a priest and principal of the Cariboo Indian residential school near Williams Lake, B.C. Although O'Connor spent time in jail he was never stripped of his ecclesiastical title. See <http://www.canada.com> web

himself involved the fact that he was celibate and the women made him do it.¹⁶² A year later, in March of 1997 Bishop O'Connor was denied parole because, according to the parole Board, "your recent psychological assessment indicates that you hold your victims in contempt, and at you hearing today you maintain that you in fact were seduced."¹⁶³ This incident spurred Barman to investigate where these attitudes toward Indigenous women originated. So, when Belmore performs work about the violence inflicted on Aboriginal women she is exposing a lineage of patriarchal attitudes that have attempted to shatter Indigenous female agency.

Fringe (2008, figure 15) is a jolting image in which an Aboriginal woman is shown with her back to the viewer; a deep red slash runs from her right shoulder to her left hip. The image is a visual record of how deep is the cut of the patriarchal mind-set. Paintings of odalisques rendered by European male painters, especially the Orientalists,

site of the *Vancouver Sun*, announcement, no author given; accessed May 5, 2010. See also Hawthorn, "Disgraced Bishop Dead of Heart Attack," <http://www.theglobeandmail.com>, accessed April 6, 2010. This also addresses the issue of rapes that occurred in boarding schools. See also Knowles, "The Heart of its Women: Rape, (Residential Schools), and Re-membering," 136-137.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Barman, 237-238.

readily come to mind.¹⁶⁴ The difference between these paintings and the work by Belmore is that this female figure does not directly confront the viewer. *Fringe* was produced using a backlit transparency in a lightbox which accentuates the wound on the reclining nude Aboriginal woman, the white cloth and the sterility of her surroundings. Her head rests on a pillow and a white cloth covers her hips and buttocks. She has short dark hair with noticeable blonde streaks in it. The sutured gash shows signs of crusted blood and the beginnings of a scar are visible. Falling from each stitch are red beads which have been strung onto white thread.

Belmore is critiquing the history of Orientalism. The representation of the female nude has been historically linked to the male gaze, meaning that women exist to satisfy patriarchal desires. It is not only sexual in nature. It involves questions of power and who serves whom. When the woman represented is non-European, it takes on a whole new meaning. Trinh Minh-ha says that difference (of

¹⁶⁴ Anyone with a vague knowledge of art history would make the association with Orientalism fashionable among nineteenth century French painters. Kathleen Ritter discusses this in "The Reclining Nude and Other Provocations," 62-65; Ritter also mentions other paintings of reclining nudes that were produced before and after Orientalism: Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538), Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres' *La Grande Odalisque* (1814), and Edouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863). These paintings are often discussed in art historical discourse as objects subject to the male gaze. Orientalism also references Imperialism. See Said, *Orientalism*, xv-xxx, introduction 1-28 (entire book).

white women from women of color) is "no more than a tool of self-defense and conquest."¹⁶⁵ The non-European woman is viewed as exotic, wanton, eager to serve her male oppressors (viewer), dependent, thoughtless and yet expendable. The image harkens back to the Malinche/Pocahontas/Sacajawea syndrome, in which the beautiful Indian princess is at the beck and call of colonial desire.

Belmore's image is upsetting to view. At the opening of the IAIA exhibition *Badlands* held in Santa Fe on June 26, 2009, there were audible gasps from museum patrons when they saw *Fringe*. Everyone wanted to know if it was real given Belmore's reputation for producing work that shocks. This author asked her when she arrived later that evening if the wound was real. Her answer was, "Oh no, I'm dark, but even I'm not that dark." The beauty of the female form rendered by Ingres, Manet, or Titian draws the viewer into the images. In *Fringe*, the viewer wants to stop looking but cannot; it is the horror that both repulses and attracts. Two important elements on the figure are the wound that is beginning to heal and the red beads that hang from the gash. The color red is associated with blood, war and, as mentioned earlier, prostitution (the red light district),

¹⁶⁵ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, 79-116; Chapter 3, "Difference:"A Special Third World Women Issue."

but the beads have a decorative, celebratory feeling to them. They also signify Indianness. As previously discussed, Mendieta used blood as a medium that represented rejuvenation and renewal. Belmore similarly applies Mendieta's definition of blood. Beads have been used to decorate hair, blankets, pow-wow regalia and clothing with protective symbols in numerous Indigenous cultures. *Fringe* seems to be Belmore's way of making war with the stereotype of Native women as ripe for the taking. By not engaging the viewer, the woman acknowledges the destructive nature of violence against women. In doing so she does not participate in the patriarchal game that would see her as available for service. This could also potentially be construed as such because of the streak of blonde hair nestled in the model's black hair. Blonde hair is not typically associated with Aboriginal women, therefore, it could represent the patriarchal dictum which attempted to control, assimilate and project the same signifiers associated with reclining non-Native women onto Aboriginal women. There are numerous colloquialisms in contemporary culture which refer to blondness, such as *Blonde is better*, *Blondes have more fun*, *Blonde Bombshells*, *Gentlemen prefer blondes*, *dumb blonde jokes* and the visual signifier of

blondeness attributed to sex-symbols like Marilyn Monroe. The figure in *Fringe* also shows the viewer that she has not been destroyed; she is wounded, but she is healing. Of this particular work Belmore said:

Some people look at this reclining figure and think that it is a cadaver, but I look at it and I don't see that. I see it as a wound that is on the mend. It wasn't self-inflicted, but nonetheless, it is bearable. She can sustain it. So it is a very simple scenario. She will get up and go on, but she will carry that mark with her.¹⁶⁶

Freeze (2006, figure 16) was a collaboration between Belmore and her Cuban-born husband Osvaldo Yero. The performance marked the freezing death of the seventeen-year-old Aboriginal man Neil Stonechild. Stonechild was dropped off by the Canadian police outside Saskatoon in freezing temperatures and subsequently died. This performance illustrated the practice of "police assisted" freezing deaths, which is common in rural regions, but

¹⁶⁶ Ritter, "The Reclining Nude and Other Provocations," 65. See also Çelik, "Colonialism, Orientalism, and the Canon," 202-205. There are strong similarities between the intention behind this work and that of Turkish painter Osman Hamdi (1842-1910). Hamdi studied with French Orientalist artist Jean-Léon Gérôme and Gustave Berlinger and tried in his lifetime to paint representations of his people, particularly women, in a way that contradicted European narratives. *Girl Reading* (1893) portrays a young woman, fully dressed lying stomach down on a couch. Her upper body is perched upward by her forearms and in her hands she holds an open book that she is intently reading. Behind her is a bookcase filled with more books. In the words of Zeynep Çelik she is "given back her thinking mind and intellectual life, which had been erased by Orientalist painters," 204. Hamdi's corrective attempts were met with resistance. Çelik notes that it is not until recently that Hamdi's paintings have been incorporated into the canon. This bodes well for artists of non-European descent both dead and alive, not that they have been excluded, but that the gates have begun to open.

probably unheard of in urban areas. *Freeze* was a site specific installation sculpture done in conjunction with *Nuit Blanche* (2006), a city-wide visual-arts festival held in Toronto. The sculpture consisted of ten waist high blocks of ice with each letter of Stonechild's last name carved into the ice. The installation was situated on Queen Street West at the Royal Car Wash. On a wall next to the installation the following was inscribed:

Last seen alive in police custody/under the influence/found 5 days later frozen to death in a field/wearing one shoe/marks on body likely caused by handcuff/aboriginal teenage boy/dropped off and walking to where?/In memory of Neil Stonechild (1973-1990).¹⁶⁷

The question to the audience is, would a young, slightly inebriated, non-Aboriginal male be left in the middle of nowhere to freeze? It seems that the resounding answer is no. Stonechild's regrettable misfortune was that he was Aboriginal and intoxicated, which made him the

¹⁶⁷ Crosby, "Humble Materials and Powerful Signs: Remembering the Suffering of Others," 78. In a footnote Crosby writes that another aboriginal man, "Darrell Night was dropped off by two police officers in twenty degree below centigrade temperatures in a field outside Saskatoon in January 2000. He survived, but the frozen body of another Aboriginal man was discovered in the same area. (accessed Aril 21, 2008). Days later, another Aboriginal victim was found. When Night came forward with his story, it led to a RCMP investigation into other freezing deaths and the conviction of the two constables who had abandoned Night. The Stonechild case of 1990 was then re-opened, concluding in a judicial inquiry. See "Neil Stonechild: Timeline," CBC News online, updated November 3, 2005, <http://www.cbc.lca/new/background/stonechild/timeline.html>. See also Tasha Hubbard's film *Two Worlds Colliding* (2004), <http://www.nfb.ca/collecton/films/fiche/?id=51081>." 78.

target of racism. Given the history of such deeds, Belmore's vehemence to record it drew attention to this appalling practice. The ice which eventually melted speaks of impermanence, but it also alludes to the inevitable melting of the ice, which would then reveal the horrors beneath. Again, Belmore gives justice to someone who can no longer speak for himself. *Nuit Blanche* began at 6:00 pm and ended at 6:00 am, thousands were said to have attended.

The installation *Blood on the Snow* (figure 14) is yet another example of the senseless destruction of genocide. This work is comparable to Abramović's *Balkan Baroque* in that it centers around the topic of ethnic cleansing. An oversized, white comforter dominated the exhibition space in the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery. In the center of the comforter was a white upholstered chair with blood across the top of the chair. The minimalist rendering of the work imparts power. The chair is a motif that was used by Belmore in *Mawu-che-hitoowin: A Gathering of People for Any Purpose* and operates in the same way in *Blood in the Snow*. The absence of a person or persons implies a presence.

The color red as blood resurfaces here. Again, the spilling of blood, which will flow into the earth when the

snow melts, becomes a symbol of regeneration.¹⁶⁸ The concept of the blood of martyrs fertilizing the earth is analogous to Diego Rivera's fresco *The Blood of the Revolutionary Martyrs Fertilizing the Fields* (1926) in the Autonomous University in Chapingo, Mexico. In Belmore's case the martyrs were unarmed Sioux men, women, and children. Like the imagery in *Freeze*, Belmore exploits the starkness, coldness and sterility of snow and ice, elements that conceal the earth, yet she contrasts the red of blood to the white of the snow which cannot be hidden. As much as the United States army tried to evict these people, their blood, which permeated the land, inextricably tied them to it. The past is linked to the present by combining this installation with that of *Vigil*. Like *Freeze* and *Wild*, these artistic works draw attention to the continued genocide of men, women, and children.

Belmore is having an impact on the political discussion of inclusion/exclusion that existed and still exists. Writer Michael Lithgow reviewed Belmore's exhibition *Rising to the Occasion* at the Vancouver Art Gallery (June 7-October 5, 2008) on June 12, 2008. Lithgow

¹⁶⁸ The blood of the martyrs flowing into the earth symbolizes the continuity of life and the vitality of the people or persons it came from. Their sacrifice and untimely deaths do not go unacknowledged or unrecognized; in fact their plight provides inspiration for future generations.

speaks glowingly of Belmore's work. In his final paragraph he writes:

It is a large exhibition and there is more than I've described. It is a complicated rendering of the difficult, tragic and rage-making history of genocidal practices against First Nations and colonial policies in Canada. What translates into liberation (for this viewer of European descent) is the transformation of personal and political into performance and ritual. A white viewer can't escape the damning implications of Belmore's work, but the creative power demonstrated in her transmuting of political history through art and embodied expression is truly an inspiration.¹⁶⁹

Belmore wants her viewers, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, to feel uncomfortable. She is urging the viewer on from inaction to action by demonstrating the power of the individual to elicit change.

¹⁶⁹ Lithgow, "Rebecca Belmore at the VAG," <http://artthreat.net/2008/06/rebecca-belmore-at-the-vag/> (accessed February 4, 2010).

Chapter 5

Restoration: Empowerment through Ceremony/Ritual

It is convenient to analyze Belmore's oeuvre under the microscope of postmodernism. Blocker's definition of postmodernism, "the theoretical disputation of the terms of difference and identity, the analysis of subjectivity and authority, and the reconceptualization of history,"¹⁷⁰ can easily elucidate Belmore's work. The avant-garde is an alternative art historical label under which Belmore's work could be defined as her desire is to facilitate political and social change through her art. Feminist theoretical methodologies could also be employed. It would be a mistake, however, to look solely at these various methodologies because their origins can be located in Western European intellectual practice. These techniques have been employed by non-Aboriginal researchers from the outside, and, while they can and have been used, they fall short. Because Belmore speaks to "what makes us human," many different approaches to her work are useful. Belmore's work is representative of a growing number of First Nations and Native American women artists who are challenging neo-colonial issues regarding land, identity, culture and

¹⁷⁰ Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta?*, 4.

sovereignty with restoration as their primary goal. Belmore is also one among many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women who recognize the differences they share, yet are bound by a common concern for human rights, ecology, and a political renaissance which eschews patriarchal ideology. They are part of a new wave of feminism called eco-feminism, born of transnationalism and globalization. The expansion of Native performance art and the manifestos that have evolved out of these performance endeavors also provide a framework for analyzing Belmore's work.

Behind all of Belmore's creations are stories layered in time, past with the present, and present with the future. This device of storytelling is intimately related to Aboriginal practices which passed down histories through the oral tradition.¹⁷¹ It is the story that keeps memory alive.¹⁷² Stories are also indispensable tools in Aboriginal performance art. Belmore participates in acts of resistance which decolonize herself and the histories of Aboriginal people through the stories.

¹⁷¹ Howe, "Tribalography: The Power of Native Stories," 67. Howe says that "Native Stories are power. They create people. They author tribes."

¹⁷² Darby, "Into the Sacred Circle: Homecomings in Native Women's Contemporary Performance," 67-73.

Her emphasis on violence against women is critical in the discourse of colonialism. Nations are often feminized, and there are notable art historical examples of paintings in which women signify a particular country. Perhaps the most famous is the engraving *Vespucci Discovering America*, by Theodore Galle (1600, figure 17). In the center of the print Amerigo Vespucci is seen fully clothed, with the flag of conquest in one hand and a nautical instrument associated with civilization in the other. He gazes down upon a naked Aboriginal woman who rests on a hammock. The woman has a look of amazement on her face as she acknowledges Vespucci's gaze. This woman represents *America*. Surrounding the woman is a lush background of vegetation and various animals. In the far center of the engraving there are more unclothed inhabitants, male and female, who are sitting around a fire. To the left of Vespucci are a several boats anchored in the ocean and a smaller vessel near the shore. Vespucci seems to say "Here I am to show you the way." He is depicted as civilized through his elaborate clothing and the woman is uncivilized due to her nakedness. The figure of the woman is the embodiment of the land, and the land defines the image of the woman. As was seen in the Oka Crisis, First Nations

people believe that the land is sacred and the land is their mother, the place of home and of identity.

It is this concept that punctuates the loss of identity that occurs as a result of land loss. When Belmore protests policies of Shell Oil Company through 671B or takes a giant wooden megaphone across Canada, she is drawing attention to land theft, identity loss, and rape of the land. This is what Smith means when she writes that rape is not limited to the physical act but takes place on a multiple levels. In *Relocation Upon Relocation*, Inés Hernández-Ávila (Nez Perce) writes that "For many activist Native women of this hemisphere the concern with 'home' involves concern with 'homeland.' Even when Native women activists no longer reside on their ancestral land bases (though many still do) they continue to defend the tribal sovereignty of their own communities as well as communities of other Indigenous peoples."¹⁷³

This is one of the many differences between Western, non-Aboriginal feminism and Aboriginal feminism according

¹⁷³ Hernández-Ávila, "Relocations Upon Relocations," 492. Hernández-Ávila uses the term activism to include community organizers, educators, writers, artists, media people, environmentalists, and health professionals, for example, who consciously advocate for the betterment of Native communities, 505.

to Hernández-Ávila.¹⁷⁴ Western feminism engages with redefining home in terms of personal spaces, "rooms of one's own, with expanding home from the domestic to the public sphere," which does not include the concept of homeland.¹⁷⁵ According to Caren Kaplan, the origin of these discourses arises from Virginia Wolfe's essay "A Room of One's Own" and her statement written in the winter of 1936-1937 which reads, "As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world."¹⁷⁶ Kaplan comments that Western feminists have used this declaration as a call to arms in the pursuit of a global sisterhood.¹⁷⁷ This statement implies the luxury of choice, Indigenous and other women of color, working class women, have been victims of displacement; preference was not an option. Many Western feminists can trace their ancestry back to those who initially displaced Indigenous peoples. However well meaning, they would be hard pressed to understand dislocation and the need for homeland, unless

¹⁷⁴ The word feminism as applied to First Nations and Native American women is problematic. It would be better to say that gender practices were different. This term is employed here because of its continual use by authors writing about these issues. Jaimes-Guerrero prefers the term Native Womanism; see Jaimes-Guerrero, "'Patriarchal Colonialism' and Indigenism: Implications for Native Feminist Spirituality and Native Womanism," 67.

¹⁷⁵ Kaplan, "The Politics of Location as Transnational Feminist Critical Practice," 137.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

they have experienced this for themselves, such as the Jews. In light of history's most recent conflicts in Africa, Serbia, Iran, and Iraq this comprehension becomes possible.

According to Kaplan, economic equality championed by Western middle class feminists presents awkward situations that are not easily circumvented in the form of domestic labor. Displacement for Indigenous women has left them few employment options. The service industry is the largest employer of such women. Middle class and upper class women are also major employers of these women who provide child care and housekeeping services to upwardly mobile women. They could not work outside the home without the services of women, which places middle and upper class women (particularly feminists) in an uncomfortable situation. Poor women of color and immigrant women laboring in the domestic sphere is not new; however, it happens at a greater rate today.¹⁷⁸

Western feminists, just like non-Aboriginal performance artists, are opposing Western patriarchal ideologies of which they have been a part. According to Landsman, ironically, early suffragists (1848-1920) who

¹⁷⁸ Mack-Canty, "Third Wave Feminism and the Need to Reweave the Nature/Culture Duality," 166.

campaigns for women's rights modeled their efforts after the women of the Iroquois confederacy.¹⁷⁹ On July 6, 1905, a statue of Sacajawea by sculptor Alice Cooper was erected in Portland, Oregon. It was funded by the National American Woman Suffrage Association.¹⁸⁰ Sacajawea was memorialized in what was billed as Sacajawea Day. The contributions of Pocahontas were also touted on Sacajawea Day. These memorials tend to encourage the "selective amnesia" to which Paul Chaat Smith refers. The violent history of colonization is forgotten while Indigenous people are depicted as contributing to their own downfall.¹⁸¹ If Aboriginal women are remembered at all, it is as collaborators in the conquest of the Americas.¹⁸²

First Nations and Native American women are confronted with Western patriarchal ideologies regarding gender which were in direct opposition to their own, coupled with the new status as traitor, ascribed to them by their own people, if they deviate from the norm. Most Aboriginal tribes within the Americas were egalitarian, so the fight for equality on that level was foreign. However, there has

¹⁷⁹ Landsman, "The 'Other' as Political Symbol: Image of Indians in the Woman Suffrage Movement," 247-252.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 273.

¹⁸¹ Huhndorf, 105-106.

¹⁸² Ibid. However, it would be important to note that the suffragists saw them as strong women to be emulated.

been significant trouble in Indian country as many tribes have begun to adopt patriarchal notions. The roots of this turn of events circle back to the Malinche/Pocahontas/Sacajawea syndrome. There is still more to be said about these women from the patriarchal viewpoint.

First of all, the conquest involved sexual violence. Through sexual violence, colonialism effectively removed Indigenous women from positions of power, replaced traditional gender roles with Western patriarchal systems, and wielded control over Native women's bodies.¹⁸³ Indianess was associated with the over sexed, non-Christian savage which further perpetuated their ill treatment. Historian Jean Barman writes that:

The campaign to tame Aboriginal sexuality so profoundly sexualized Aboriginal women that they were rarely permitted any other form of identity. Not just Aboriginal women but Aboriginal women's agency was sexualized. In the extreme case their every act became perceived as a sexual act and, because of the unceasing portrayal of their sexuality as wild and out of control, as an act of provocation. By default, Aboriginal women were prostitutes or, at best, potential concubines. Their actions were imbued with the intent that men in power had so assiduously

¹⁸³ Huhndorf, *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*, 106; see also Jaimes-Guerrero, "'Patriarchal Colonialism' and Indigenism: Implications for Native Feminist Spirituality and Native Womanism," 60. Jaimes-Guerrero says that "As a result of U.S. colonialism and patriarchal structure, the traditional authority of Native American women has been systematically disempowered up to the present time." Although she is speaking of Native American women specifically, the same effects can be seen throughout the Americas and other global communities.

ascribed to them thus vitiating any responsibility for their or other men's actions toward them.¹⁸⁴

The Named and Unnamed, Fringe, and Wild refute the notion that Aboriginal women are there for the taking. Although *Wild* is part satire, Belmore seriously embeds herself in a space once belonging to the Aboriginal wild, built upon by a non-Aboriginal family, yet now a public art space belonging to both entities. She redirects the position of power to herself and to Aboriginal women. A subtle threat is implied in Belmore's actions which seems to sound a warning, "I dare you to try it now."¹⁸⁵

Patriarchal practices in regard to women had a trickledown effect.¹⁸⁶ Many of these concepts were unwittingly incorporated into contemporary Aboriginal societies.¹⁸⁷ Native women have been hesitant to speak about these discrepancies because they do not want the males in their community to be associated with stereotypes of the drunken abusive Indian. Yet spousal abuse is a problem in Indian country. Many Native women leaders and

¹⁸⁴ Barman, "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900," 264. Although speaking specifically of British Columbia, it illustrates colonial attitudes toward Indigenous women that extend beyond these borders. See also Huhndorf, 106-108.

¹⁸⁵ There are similarities between Belmore's *Wild* and Peruvian artist Kukuli Velarde's *Plunder Me Baby* exhibition, first shown at the Garth Clark Gallery on May 1, 2007. Velarde presented a number of Moche-like sculptural vessels of various highly sexualized Indian princesses. The sexual posturing was threatening rather than welcoming.

¹⁸⁶ Jaimes-Guerrero, 67.

¹⁸⁷ It is important to note that not all tribes have done this.

activists have taken a proactive approach to the situation. The documentary film, *Hózhó of Native Women* (1997), by documentary filmmaker and anthropologist Beverly Singer, provides interviews with numerous Native women leaders who are actively assisting in the health, education, and welfare of their respective communities. They are vigorously dealing with issues of abuse, exposing them so that through this process healing and empowerment can take place. Oglala Sioux leader Cecelia Fire Thunder said that "As women we are the cultural carriers of our families. We have always realized who we have been. It is not that our men have abandoned us. It is that they have been so beaten down historically."¹⁸⁸

Other Aboriginal women such as Belmore have utilized the arts in this effort. Sisters Lisa Mayo, Gloria Miguel, and Muriel Miguel formed the first Native feminist drama company, Spiderwoman Theatre, in 1975. Drama and performance are unique mediums in which Native communities have been able to express political thought and issues of gender and Indigenous feminism more directly.¹⁸⁹ Part of the drive for the creation of Spiderwoman Theatre was the

¹⁸⁸ Singer, *Hózhó of Native Women*.

¹⁸⁹ Huhndorf, 110-115. Again, the idea of peaceful protest makes performance unique. The saying that "The pen is mightier than the sword" can apply here. The performance has the ability combat injustices.

sexism these sisters felt from men when they were involved in the American Indian Movement. Mayo writes that:

When the women were working with the men (in the movements of the 1960s and 1970s), things came down—the women with AIM, on Alcatraz, all the different things that happened at Wounded Knee. This was early on... (Muriel) was angry as hell because when it came down to really negotiating and talking with the powers that be, no women were allowed in the room. They'd say, "Go ahead. Make the coffee. Write the letters." Things like that, it was awful. So this is what we were talking about, part of what we were talking about. We said it out loud.¹⁹⁰

AIM was equally disillusioning for Native men. Jimmie Durham and Paul Chaat Smith stepped down from leadership positions in AIM due to the brokenness and corruption they saw within that leadership.¹⁹¹ It was disconcerting to learn that many members of AIM were on the government payroll; therefore decisions were being made based on United States governmental interests rather than tribal needs.¹⁹² Most revolting was the discovery that the death of political activist Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash, long blamed on the FBI, was in fact ordered by men in AIM leadership.¹⁹³ Native women activists have stepped up efforts to energize and reactivate feminine agency thereby revitalizing tribal

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 113.

¹⁹¹ Durham, "A Certain Lack of Coherence," 46-56; Chaat Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*, vii-ix.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*, 10.

initiatives for the purpose of self-determination. They refuse to participate in their own victimization. Jaimes Guerrero writes that:

My conceptualization of "Native Womanism" advocates for more "historical agency" in re-envisioning a pre-patriarchal, pre-colonialist, and pre-capitalist U.S. society, as well as for Native women's self-determination in reclaiming their Indigenous (that is, matrilineal/matrifocal) roles that empower them with respect and authority in Indigenous governance.¹⁹⁴

While many activists make this claim, it is in fact impossible to know much of what came before. As previously mentioned Belmore has stated that it is the present that must be dealt with. Jaimes-Guerrero has also observed that the connection between the "denigration and subordination" of women and the "degradation and subjugation" of nature gives Native Womanism an ecological perspective.¹⁹⁵ As Mack-Canty points out, there seems to be a correlation between militarism, sexism, classism, and environmental damage.¹⁹⁶ No one has stated it better than political activist Winona LaDuke (Ojibway), co-chair of the Indigenous Women's Network, and director of the White Earth Land Recovery Project:

¹⁹⁴ Jaimes-Guerrero, 67. Barman notes that it is impossible to know what happened before; see Barman, 243.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Mack-Canty, "Third Wave Feminism and the Need to Reweave the Nature/Culture Duality," 169.

Both worldwide and in North America, Native people are at the center of the present environmental and economic crisis...Indigenous peoples remain on the front lines of the North American struggle to protect our environment. We understand clearly that our lives and those of our future generations are totally dependent on our ability to continue resisting colonialism and industrialization in our lands.¹⁹⁷

Globalization has had a direct effect on local economies and has disrupted the lives and livelihood of Third World Indigenous peoples, particularly women. Ecology and the plight of women as has been shown are key for Belmore. The art of Ana Mendieta also expressed these concerns. Belmore does mention more than once her preoccupation with "what makes us human," because that is the direction that must be pursued for the preservation of life.

This idea is also the main focal point of global feminism, or eco-feminism which professes a concern for all life and life forms. Eco-feminism or third wave feminism as Colleen Mack-Canty calls it refuses "thinking that divides the world into hierarchical categories with one aspect regarded as superior and the 'other' regarded inferior, recognizing instead the existence of multiplicities."¹⁹⁸

Environmental racism that is being practiced on Indian

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 167. Winona LaDuke outlined the work she does within her own community at a Public Forum at the University of New Mexico, in conjunction with the Native American Studies Program, on Friday, April 30, 2010.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 158.

reservations is cause for concern since "over half of all American Indians live in communities with one or more uncontrolled toxic waste sites."¹⁹⁹ Although Mack-Canty describes these dilemmas as paramount to eco-feminism, these are subjects that have been part of Native performance art. Mack-Canty also writes about these topics under the auspices of post-colonial feminism.²⁰⁰ As stated earlier for Belmore, there is no post-colonial; neo-colonialism is the more appropriate label.

It is also through the lens of Native performance art that Belmore's work can be scrutinized. To recap Courtney Elkin Mohler's discussion of the ways in which an indigenous theatrical praxis "fosters alternative modes of empowerment and works to decolonize,"²⁰¹ Mohler writes:

I argue that this can be achieved through (1) exposing popularly accepted racial and ethnic stereotypes as identity constructions; (2) rewriting history in a manner that repositions historically marginalized and objectified cultures as active subjects; (3) utilizing residual creative energies that transcend the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 166. It is important to note that one of the reasons Belmore had no viewers for her first show was that "the community was dealing with serious social tension, which included contaminated drinking water;" see Watson, 24.

²⁰⁰ Mack-Canty states that the term "post" does not imply that colonialism is over, 164; however, it is my contention that words are vital to understanding. Therefore, neo-colonialism is the better term.

²⁰¹ Mohler, "'We are not Guilty!' The Creation of an Indigenous Theatrical Praxis," 245. She is speaking of the way in which the play *Bernabé* by Luis Valdez and Teatro Campesino, and *Foghorn* by Hanay Geiogamah and the Native American Theater Ensemble (Nate) illustrate this praxis. It is easily applied to other Native works, be it performance art, theatre, music or dance.

normative methods for "art making," thereby exposing an alternative indigenous worldview; and (4) destabilizing historical "facts" that constitute an essence of "timelessness" and edifice of authority for neocolonial and imperialist practices.²⁰²

This praxis defines Belmore's work. The work of Luna and Mendieta can also be analyzed through this praxis.

The work of Belmore and Luna is effective because of their ability to be understood by "more than one public."²⁰³ Their work is made primarily for Aboriginal people, yet it is oftentimes non-Aboriginal people who are in attendance, especially when the performance takes place in a museum or art gallery.²⁰⁴ Belmore consistently talks about the difficulty she faced in being "caught between the culture of her Anishinabe speaking grandmother and the world that opened up for her at the Ontario College of Art."²⁰⁵ Luna also speaks of this difficulty but sees it as a strength in that the Indian knowledge he possesses along with his training as an artist has allowed him to mediate between two or more cultures via his art.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Mohler, 245.

²⁰³ Townsend-Gault, "Ritualizing Ritual's Ritual," 51.

²⁰⁴ Townsend-Gault, *The Named and Unnamed*, 14. Belmore wants to reach those for whom the mores of gallery going have little value; see also Townsend-Gault, "Hot Dogs, A Ball Gown, Adobe, and Words: The Modes and Material of Identity," 122.

²⁰⁵ Townsend-Gault, "Hot Dogs, A Ball Gown, Adobe, and Words: The Modes and Material of Identity," 119.

²⁰⁶ Townsend-Gault, *Land Spirit Power*, 190.

Part of their success has been their ability to “develop public symbols of private knowledge, and for more than one public.”²⁰⁷ Belmore and Luna are consummate storytellers. The false notions that they have exposed in their performances in relation to conquest, consequences, and restoration tell a story. Questions are asked; answers are not given. They simply open up the dialogue. In the words of Luna, “talking about a situation is the first step to recovery.”²⁰⁸

Belmore and Luna use this “position of intimacy” to challenge the social order as did Schneeman and earlier feminist performance artists.²⁰⁹ Mendieta and Abramović also utilize this approach. Schneeman was speaking of her experiences of being silenced as a woman, which in turn resonated with the milieu of other women. When Mendieta embedded her body in the earth or re-enacted the aftermath of a rape, she was speaking of her own feelings of displacement and yearnings for her homeland and sense of identity. Likewise, Abramović’s *Balkan Baroque* was inextricably tied to her Serbian heritage. All of these performances address issues of senseless violence and

²⁰⁷ Townsend-Gault, “Ritualizing Ritual’s Ritual,” 51.

²⁰⁸ Luna, interview with Paul Chaat Smith and Truman Lowe, in *Rehearsal for Emendatio*, Washington D.C., Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, DVD, 2005.

²⁰⁹ Forte, 257.

attempt to memorialize the victims of such inexplicable acts and attitudes. Their performances are rituals or ceremonies that "restore the balance." The artists discussed defy Western patriarchal intellectual thought that is destructive to both men and women. The conversation generated by these artists is one of freedom from oppressive stereotypes and behavior. Performances such as Belmore's, Luna's, Mendieta's, Schneeman's and Abramović's, cause the viewer to pause, to think, and to do everything in their power to prevent the horrors of the past from revisiting the present and future.

Recovery or restoration is at the heart of Belmore's work which has been internationally recognized. Belmore was chosen and funded by her own Canadian government, of whom she has been highly critical, to represent Canada at the Venice Biennial in 2005.²¹⁰ She also participated in the Havana Biennial in 1991. No other female Aboriginal artist has achieved this kind of recognition. The ramifications of such an honor are enormous: it means that someone is listening. It was appropriate that Belmore recalled the words of the Métis leader and martyr, Louis Riel while

²¹⁰ For more on Belmore's video installation, *Fountain*, presented at the 2005 Venice Biennial see the exhibition catalogue, *Rebecca Belmore: Fountain*, Kamloops Art Gallery and Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 2005.

taking her megaphone across Canada for the performances of *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother*. He prophesied that "My people will sleep for one hundred years and when they awake, it will be the artists who give them back their spirit." The art of Rebecca Belmore is the fulfillment of that prophecy.

Appendix A:
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Rebecca Belmore

Re: Image reproduction permission?

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From: Rebecca Belmore [redacted]
To: Kdeblassie [redacted]
Subject: Re: Image reproduction permission?
Date: Wed, Apr 28, 2010 3:57 pm
Attachments: Victorious_%.jpg (366K), Fringe_(sm_.jpg).jpg (266K), freeze-w-crowd.jpg (438K), Wild.jpg (325K), 05rb2002bloodonthesnow.jpg (86K)

Hi Kathleen,

Sure, I will see what I can put together this week or early next. Please write to me again if you do not have anything by Monday from me. I have to go out to load discs, my computer is on the fritz.

Please note title: blood on the snow

for now,
Rebecca

— On Wed, 4/28/10, [redacted] wrote:

From: [Kdeblassie](#) [redacted]
Subject: Image reproduction permission?
To: [rebeccabelmore](#) [redacted]
Received: Wednesday, April 28, 2010, 1:45 PM

Dear Rebecca,

I am writing to request permission to use some of your images in my Masters Thesis titled "Conquest, Consequences, Restoration: The Art of Rebecca Belmore."

I met you last year at the February public forum, "Conversations to Remember," held at IAIA in Santa Fe, where you gave me your e-mail address. I also spoke with you again at the June opening of "Badlands" at IAIA's museum in downtown Santa Fe.

The work I have researched for my thesis will be used solely for educational purposes. I am requesting permission to use images from

1. Rising to the Occasion from Twelve Angry Crinolines
2. Artifact 671B
3. Wild
4. Ayum-ee-aawach-Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother
5. Mawu-che-hitoowin: A Gathering of People for Any Purpose
6. Making Always War
7. Victorious
8. The Named and the Unnamed
9. Blood in the Snow
10. Freeze
11. Fringe

Thank you for your consideration, and thank you for your time and patience last February, and especially in June as I could see the preparation for "Badlands" seemed exhausting.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

James Luna

RE: Permission to use images

From: Luna, James [REDACTED]
To: kdeblassie [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Permission to use images
Date: Thu, Apr 29, 2010 5:47 pm

KDB,
The images can be used with my permission for academic purposes but not for publication as there is a charge for their use.
JLuna

From: [kdeblassie](#) [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 8:14 AM
To: Luna, James
Subject: Permission to use images

Dear Mr. Luna,

I am writing to request permission to use images of Artifact Piece in my thesis. The images would be used solely for academic purposes. The images I was looking at are on page 39 of Jennifer Gonzalez's book "Subject to Display." The title of my thesis is "Conquest, Consequences, Restoration: The Art of Rebecca Belmore." I have spoken with Rebecca several times and she cites you as one of her early mentors. I appreciate your consideration.

Thank you for your help,

Kathleen DeBlassie, MA candidate
Department of Art and Art History
University of New Mexico

Artists Rights Society

Subj: **Re: Permission to use image**
Date: 5/28/2010 9:06:03 AM Mountain Daylight Time
From: [crhadigan](#) [REDACTED]
To: [kdeblassi](#) [REDACTED]

Dear Kathleen,

Thank you for your email of May 26, 2010 requesting permission to reproduce Marina Abramovic's *Balkan Baroque* and Carolee Schneeman's *Interior Scroll* on the ProQuest UMI Dissertation Publishing website in conjunction with your forthcoming dissertation titled "Conquest, Consequences, Restoration: The Art of Rebecca Belmore."

Permission is hereby granted for the print and online uses as detailed in your email. Specifically, for the use of the work in the context of a dissertation only, available for download as a locked digital file on the UMI password protected website, <http://www.proquest.com>. No rights fees shall be attendant to this usage. Please note that in the event that any additional uses of the work are planned such as further print or online publication, permission must be obtained in advance from ARS and a permissions fee may apply.

Please include the following copyright credit lines:

© 2010 Carolee Schneemann / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

© 2010 Marina Abramovic. Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery / (ARS), New York

The WWW Images may not be transferred to or reproduced on any other storage/retrieval/transmission/display system, including but not limited to CD-ROM, DVD, CD-I, whether now known or hereafter devised for sale, rental, public display, or distribution of any kind without the express written permission of ARS. The Licensee shall not grant a license to print, download, copy, share, modify, or otherwise extract the Images listed below for commercial purposes, and the licensee shall take all necessary measures to impede the commercial exploitation of the Images.

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Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you!

Best,

Chelsea Rhadigan
Permissions Assistant
A R S
Artists Rights Society . 536 Broadway . Fifth Floor . New York, NY 10012
(P) 1.212.420.9160 (F): 1.212.420.9286
[REDACTED]

— Original Message —

From: [kdeblassi](#) [REDACTED]
To: [crhadigan](#) [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2010 4:46 PM
Subject: Re: Permission to use image

Dear Chelsea,

Sorry it has taken me so long to reply. I had a problem with my computer modem which is now taken care of. It seems that the thesis will be archived on Pro-Quest. I should be receiving more information

on that soon. I also requested permission for Marina Abramovic's "Balkan Baroque." Will you also handle that request?

I am forwarding the tentative abstract. It is not absolutely necessary that I have either image in the thesis, however the work of Schneeman and Abramovic are often brought up in conjunction with Belmore's work. Schneeman has been such a significant influence on performance artists, and in many ways paved the way for women. I have also included a brief description of performance art in the thesis. Much of the work that Belmore has created addresses issues of violence against women. I have also examined this from a historical perspective, particularly as it pertains to First Nations women of Canada (and what I call the Malinche/Pocahontas/ Sacajawea syndrome. Above all, Belmore's work is about restoration and empowerment.

This is description of the thesis in a nutshell. Thank you for your help! I look forward to hearing from you!

Kathleen DeBlassie

-----Original Message-----

From: Chelsea Rhadigan [REDACTED]
To: kdeblassie [REDACTED]
Sent: Thu, Apr 29, 2010 11:44 am
Subject: Re: Permission to use image

Dear Kathleen,

Thank you for your emails. I'll be handling this request so please feel free to send any additions for artists who are members through ARS directly to me. Will your thesis be archived on Pro-Quest or something similar?

Also, can you provide the abstract of your thesis or a brief summary? Carolee Schneeman does not normally grant permission for reproduction of "Interior Scroll" but given the nature of this use she may agree to. I'd like to submit the details to her for her review. If she does not wish to grant permission she may also suggest an alternative for this project.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions and I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you!

Best,

Chelsea Rhadigan
Permissions Assistant
A R S
Artists Rights Society . 536 Broadway . Fifth Floor . New York, NY 10012
(P) 1.212.420.9160 (F): 1.212.420.9286
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 11:51 AM
To: info@arsny.com
Subject: Permission to use image

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to obtain permission to use an image of "Interior Scroll" by Carolee Schneeman in my MA thesis. The title of the thesis is "Conquest, Consequences, Restoration: The Art of Rebecca Belmore." The reproduction of this work is solely for educational purposes. Since all theses and dissertations will be filed electronically at the University of New Mexico as of summer 2010 only one copy will be used. I do see that this image is available on artstor. Please advise.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Kathleen DeBlassie, MA candidate
Department of Art and Art History
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

From: [kdeblassie](mailto:kdeblassie@unm.edu) [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 11:43 AM
To: info@arsny.com
Subject: Permission to use image

To whom it may concern:

I am requesting permission to use an image of "Balkan Baroque" by Marina Abramovic in my thesis titled, "Conquest, Consequences, Restoration: The Art of Rebecca Belmore." The reproduction of this image is solely for educational purposes. As of the summer of 2010 all theses and dissertations will be filed electronically at the University of New Mexico.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Kathleen DeBlassie, MA candidate
Department of Art and Art History
The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Re: Permission to use image

Page 1 of 3

From: Beinecke Public Services <beinecke.library@yale.edu>
To: kdeblassie [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Permission to use image
Date: Wed, May 26, 2010 2:12 pm

Dear Kathleen,

Given the date of this item, it is in the public domain.

Thank you,
Moir

Quoting [REDACTED]

>
> Dear Moira,
>
> I realized that there was an error in the title. It should be > "Vespucci Discovering America." I have searched for copyright
> data > and am inclined to believe that this particular work falls under the > public domain umbrella. There are other
> collections that also contain > this print.

>
> Does this make sense to you? Thank you for your help

>
> Kathleen

>
>
>
>
> -----Original Message-----

> From: Beinecke Public Services <beinecke.library@yale.edu>
> To: kdeblassie [REDACTED]
> Sent: Mon, May 3, 2010 3:04 pm
> Subject: Re: Permission to use image

>
>
> Dear Ms. DeBlassie,

>
> Thank you for your email regarding permission to publish Theodore > Galle's print
> of Vespucci Discovering America. I have copied below my signature > our standard
> response to requests for permission to publish.

>
> To summarize, the Beinecke does not own the copyright to this or most of the
> items in our collection. We therefore have no legal standing to grant or deny
> permission to publish. Nor can we assume responsibility of determining the
> copyright status of an item.

>
> Some sources that can help you determine this are a chart published > by Cornell
> University at <http://copyright.cornell.edu/resources/publicdomain.cfm>, or the
> the WATCH File (Writers, Artists and Their Copyright Holders)
> <http://tyler.hrc.utexas.edu/>, a database containing primarily, but not
> exclusively, the names and addresses of copyright holders or contact persons
> for authors and artists whose archives are housed, in whole or in part, in
> libraries and archives in North America and the United Kingdom.

>
> We do ask that you credit us as the source of the text, however. In > this case,
> the correct credit line should read: Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript > Library, Yale University.

>
> Please let me know if I can be of other assistance, and best of luck > with your
> publication.

>
> Moira Fitzgerald

Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina SK

Re: Permission to use image

Page 1 of 1

From: Bruce Anderson
To: kdeblassie
Cc: Rebecca Belmore
Subject: Re: Permission to use image
Date: Tue, Jun 8, 2010 4:31 pm

Dear Kathleen

Congratulations on reaching that milestone in your education. Consider this the MacKenzie Art Gallery's permission to include the Belmore work from our collection in your documentation.

Depending on which image of the work you are using, I think the title information would be different. Because the MacKenzie Art Gallery owns only the plywood floor components and recording but not the circle of chairs and sets of head phones which originally made up the installation, on the advise of the artist Rebecca Belmore we have listed the reconfigured work which we own in the following manner.

Belmore, Rebecca (Canadian, born 1960)
Untitled (reconfiguration) / Mawu-che-hitowin: A Gathering of People for any Purpose, 1992 (original), 2003
plywood, paint, vinyl, audio cassette 490 x 490 cm (installed)
Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery
purchased with funds raised by the MacKenzie Gallery Volunteers in celebration of their 40th Anniversary and with the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program
I hope this helps. Please contact me with any questions that you have about this matter.

Sincerely

Bruce

Bruce H. Anderson, Collection Manager
MacKenzie Art Gallery
3475 Albert Street
Regina, SK
S4S 6X6
(306) 584-4280

The MacKenzie Art Gallery welcomes everyone to experience visual art in all its diversity. We seek to engage the people of Saskatchewan through our exhibitions, programs and permanent collection. Making Art Matter for over 55years.

The MacKenzie Art Gallery is a not-for-profit cultural organization supported by membership and volunteers, and generously funded by individual donors, corporate sponsors, the University of Regina, Government of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture & Recreation, City of Regina, Saskatchewan Arts Board, The Canada Council for the Arts, City of Regina Arts Commission, Regina Public Schools and Regina Catholic Schools.

>>> On 6/8/2010 at 12:03 PM, in message [REDACTED],

[REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Mr. Anderson,

I am writing to obtain permission to use an image from Rebecca Belmore's installation "A Gathering of People for any Purpose" in my masters thesis titled, "Conquest, Consequences, Restoration: The Art of Rebecca Belmore." Rebecca has given me permission and has sent me images. She is having computer difficulties so I have not hear back from her. The reproduction of this image is for academic purposes only. As of this summer all thesis/dissertations will be online through Pro-Qwest.

Thank you for your help in this matter! I appreciate it.

Kathleen DeBlassie
MA candidate
Department of Art and Art History, University of New Mexico
Albuquerque

Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery

MORRIS AND HELEN BELKIN ART GALLERY

The University of British Columbia | 1825 Main Mall | Vancouver | BC V6T 1Z2
Phone: 604 822 2759 | Fax: 604 822 6689 | Web address: www.belkin.ubc.ca

June 23, 2010

Reproduction Rights Agreement

Permission issued to:
Kathleen DeBlassie

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Title of Applicant:
MA Candidate
Department of Art and Art History
University of New Mexico

Work of art for reproduction/Credit Line:

Rebecca Belmore

The Name and the Unnamed, 2002

video installation

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, The University of British Columbia.

Purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program
and the Morris and Helen Belkin Foundation

Photo Credit: Howard Ursuliak

Permission is given to reproduce the above-mentioned work of art in the collection of the Morris
and Helen Belkin Art Gallery for one-time use only, colour reproduction, in the applicant's thesis
paper at the University of New Mexico, in 2010.

Please refer to the attached Conditions Governing Reproduction of Works of Art that form part
of this permission.

There are no fees associated with this permission.

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Terri Sudeyko, Registrar
t. 604.822.3069

[REDACTED]

Art Gallery of Ontario

RE: Image reproduction permission?

Page 1 of 3

From: Rhodes, Jane [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Image reproduction permission?
Date: Wed, Jun 23, 2010 3:00 pm
Attachments: 23690.jpg (87K)

Hi Kathleen,

It appears that Rebecca Belmore supports your project. I have attached a jpeg of:

23690
Rebecca Belmore
Rising to the Occasion, 1987-1991
Mixed media
2.0 x 1.2 x 1.2 m
Gift from the Junior Volunteer Committee, 1995
Art Gallery of Ontario, 95/173

Good luck with your thesis.

Best,
Jane Rhodes

Jane Rhodes
Image Resources
Art Gallery of Ontario
317 Dundas St. West
Toronto, ON M5T 1G4
Canada

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: June 23, 2010 3:28 PM
To: Rhodes, Jane
Subject: Fwd: Image reproduction permission?

Galerie Leong

GALERIE LELONG

528 West 26th Street
New York, NY 10001
T. 212.315.0470
F. 212.262.0624
art@galerielelong.com
www.galerielelong.com

13 rue de Téhéran 75008 Paris
Predigerplatz 10-12 8001 Zürich

July 6, 2010

Kathleen DeBlassie
MA candidate, Department of Art and Art History
University of New Mexico

RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTION AGREEMENT

RE: Color reproduction of the following works by **Ana Mendieta** in the thesis Conquest, Consequences, Restoration: The Art of Rebecca Belmore by Kathleen DeBlassie, published by the University of New Mexico.

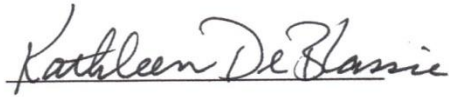
Untitled (Rape Performance)
1973
Lifetime color photograph
8 x 10 inches (20.4 x 25.4 cm)

Untitled (Grass on Woman)
1972 (Estate print 2001)
Suite of 5 color c-prints
16 x 20 inches

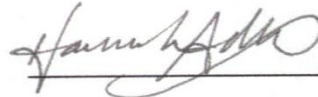
Untitled (Rape Scene)
1973
Lifetime color photograph
10 x 8 inches (25.4 x 20.3 cm)

- The Estate of Ana Mendieta and Galerie Lelong, NY, retain the images and copyrights.
- The images may not be reproduced in any other context, format, or venue, without prior written consent from Galerie Lelong.
- The images may not be altered, cropped or manipulated under any circumstance without prior written consent from Galerie Lelong.
- **The following photo credit must accompany all reproductions:**
© The Estate of Ana Mendieta
Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York
- The images may not be duplicated, loaned, sold or distributed to any other person or institution in any manner without prior written consent from Galerie Lelong.

- Please send one copy of the publication to the gallery for the artist's archives.
- I have read and agree to the above conditions:



Kathleen DeBlassie
University of New Mexico



Hannah Adkins
Galerie Lelong

Vancouver Art Gallery

Re: Permission to use images

Page 1 of 1

From: Danielle Currie [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Permission to use images
Date: Fri, Apr 30, 2010 12:16 pm

Dear Kathleen,

We have most of the files that were used for the catalogue we produced here in 2008. However, the majority of the images are not ours, so I'll have to determine which we can release. Rebecca herself may also have some to pass along. Please let me know how things proceed with her and then I can look into what is available here.

best,
Danielle

Danielle Currie
Rights and Reproductions, Vancouver Art Gallery
750 Homby St., Vancouver, BC, V6Z 2H7 CANADA
T (604) 682 4700 x 220 F (604) 682 1086 www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

On 28-Apr-10, at 2:04 PM, [REDACTED] wrote:

To whom it may concern:

My name is Kathleen DeBlassie. I am a MA candidate in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of New Mexico. I am completing my thesis titled "Conquest, Consequences, Restoration: The Art of Rebecca Belmore." I would like to use the images from "Rising to the Occasion" and have also written to Rebecca Belmore. These images will be used solely for academic purposes.

The images I would like to copy are:

Rising to the Occasion
Artifact 671B
Wild
Speaking to Their Mother
A gathering of People for any Purpose
Making Always War
Victorious
Vigil from the Named and Unnamed
Blood in the Snow
Freeze
Fringe

Please advise. Thank you for your help. If I could have this information on or before June 1, I would appreciate it.

Kathleen DeBlassie
MA candidate, Dept. of Art and Art History, University of New Mexico

=

The Heard Museum

THE HEARD MUSEUM

REQUEST FOR REPRODUCTIONS " APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO PUBLISH

Name of applicant: Kathleen DeBlassie
Organization or agency (if appropriate):
Address:
City, State, Zip:
Phone: Fax: E-mail:

Intended Use of Material

- These materials are for personal research and will not be copied, reproduced, or publicly displayed.
These materials will be reproduced. (Please attach a description of the project, if available.)

Author/Director/Producer: Kathleen DeBlassie
Title or description of use: Concept, Consequences, Restoration: McIntosh Rebecca
Publisher: University of New Mexico BeLore
Projected date of publication: Fall 2010
Format: Book Magazine Film/Video program Advertisement CD-ROM/multimedia
School project/paper Other: Master's Thesis
Estimated size of edition (number of copies/size of market): electronic submission

Be sure to sign this agreement on page three.

Materials To Be Used:

Call number | Artist or Collection | Title or Descriptions

James Luna, Artifact Piece
detail of installation

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In the event the applicant engages in unauthorized reproduction of the materials, the applicant agrees to pay the museum a sum equal to three times the normal commercial use fee, not as a penalty but as liquidated damages agreed upon due to the difficulty in assessing actual damages incurred; the museum may in the event of unauthorized reproduction require surrender of all materials containing such unauthorized reproductions, and the applicant agrees that such materials shall be immediately surrendered upon receipt of request from the museum.

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3. In addition to the permission of the Heard Museum, additional permissions may be required. Those permissions may include, but are not limited to:

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Owner of original: In instances where the museum holds only a reproduction, the written permission of the owner of the original is required. It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain permission to publish reproductions from the owner of copyright (the institution, the creator of the record, the author, or his/her transferees, heirs, legatees, or literary executors).

The museum will aid the applicant in contacting pertinent individuals by providing addresses, when available. However, the museum does not warranty the accuracy of that information and shall not be responsible for any inaccurate information.

In instances where the individual or organization who may grant permission cannot be contacted, the museum may consider granting permission for reproduction based on the applicant's written evidence of a good faith effort to contact the appropriate individual. However, the museum assumes no responsibility for infringement of

copyright laws, invasion of privacy, or any other improper or illegal use that may arise from reproduction of any image. To the extent permitted by law, in all instances the applicant agrees to hold the museum and its agents harmless against any and all claims arising or resulting from the use of this image and shall indemnify the museum and its agents for any and all costs and damages arising or resulting from any such unauthorized use.

4. All reproductions must cite "Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona" in a caption or credit. The museum may require that the artist, artist's tribal affiliation, title of the work, dimensions, or catalog number appear in the caption or credit as well.

Credits should appear in close proximity to the image or in a special section devoted to credits. However, reproductions distributed electronically must contain the credit or caption as part of the image. When permission is granted to disseminate reproductions electronically, the museum reserves the right to require an electronic watermark or other identifying code within the scanned file.

Payment of a commercial use fee does not exempt the user from the credit line requirement. Failure to include a credit line or electronic watermark, or inaccurate captions or credits shall require the applicant to pay \$100 per image as liquidated damages and not as a penalty in view of the difficulty of assessing actual damages for this breach.

5. Except as noted below, all reproductions provided by the Heard Museum remain the property of the museum and must be returned upon completion of the project. Any separations, lithos, files containing electronic copies, or other intermediary images used in production of the final product authorized by this agreement shall be returned to the museum upon completion.

In addition to the rental fee, a charge equal to the replacement costs will be assessed for any materials not returned within 10 weeks or in damaged condition.

Applicants may be granted permission to retain reproductions or other imagery supplied by the museum for personal or educational use. If such permission is granted (see Section 9 of this form), reproductions may not be copied, scanned, exhibited, resold, or used for any other purpose than that specified in this application. Copies shall not be deposited in another library, archive, or repository without the permission of the museum.

6. Unless approved in advance by the Heard Museum, each image must be reproduced unaltered and in its entirety; the image must not be cropped, overprinted, printed on color stock, or bleed off the page.

The museum reserves the right to examine proofs and captions for accuracy and sensitivity prior to publication with the right to revise if necessary. The museum reserves the right to refuse any request and to impose such conditions as it may deem advisable in the best interests of the museum.

If permission is granted to distribute an electronic copy of an image, the distributed copy shall not exceed a display or print resolution of greater than VGA screen resolution (72 dots per inch or 640x480 pixels).

7. Prepayment of all fees, including use fees, is required before permission is granted. Default in payment shall immediately revoke permission.

If the size of edition or number of editions exceeds the terms specified in this application, the applicant shall immediately pay the difference in use fees. If payment is not received within thirty days, the applicant agrees to pay a use fee equal to twice the originally quoted use fee.

8. The applicant agrees to send the Heard Museum one copy, best edition, of the work containing the reproduction at no charge. All expenses for shipping and handling are to be borne by the applicant.

9. Additional conditions or exceptions to the above requirements:

Endorsements:

By signing this application, I accept personally and on behalf of any organization I represent the conditions set forth above:

Signed: Kathleen DeBlasio

Dated: May 19, 2010

When signed by an authorized agent of the Heard Museum, this form constitutes permission for reproduction as outlined in this application.

Signed: Betty Murphy

Dated: September 1, 2010

Appendix B

Figures



Figure 1. Rebecca Belmore. *Rising to the Occasion*, 1987-1991. Mixed Media, 2.0x1.2x1.2m. Gift from the Junior Volunteer Committee, 1995. Art Gallery of Ontario, 95/173.



Figure 2. *Interior Scroll*, 1975. © 2010 Carolee Schneeman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Figure 3. Ana Mendieta, *Untitled (Grass on Woman)*, 1972 (Estate print 2001) Suite of 5 color c-prints, 16 x 20 inches. ©The Estate of Ana Mendieta Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York.



Figure 4. Ana Mendieta, *Untitled (Rape Performance)* 1973, Lifetime color photograph 8 x 10 inches (20.4 x 25.4 cm). © The Estate of Ana Mendieta, Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York.



Figure 5. *Balkan Baroque*, Video installation and performance XLVII Biennale, Venice, 1997. © 2010 Marina Abramović. Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery/ (ARS), New York. Photo: Elio Montanari.



Figure 6. *Artifact 671B*, 1988. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 7. *James Luna, Artifact Piece, 1987-1990.* Courtesy of James Luna and the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona.



Figure 8. *Wild*, 2001. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 9. *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother*, 1991-1996. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



Figure 10. Belmore, Rebecca (Canadian, born 1960) Untitled (reconfiguration) / *Mawu-che-hitoowin: A Gathering of People for any Purpose*, 1992 (original), 2003 plywood, paint, vinyl, audio cassette 490 x 490 cm (installed) Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery purchased with funds raised by the MacKenzie Gallery Volunteers in celebration of their 40th Anniversary and with the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program.



Figure 11. *Making Always War*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist and Vancouver Art Gallery.



**Figure 12. *Victorious*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist.
Performance assistant: Daina Warren.**



Figure 13. Rebecca Belmore, *The Named and the Unnamed*, 2002, video installation. Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, the University of British Columbia. Purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program and the Morris and Helen Belkin Foundation Photo Credit: Howard Ursuliak.

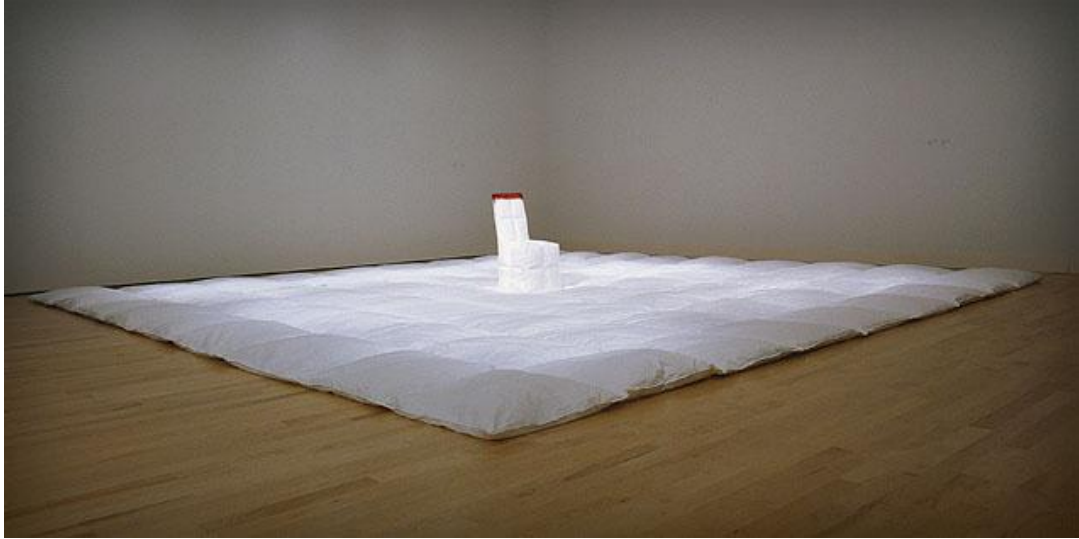


Figure 14. *Blood on the Snow*, 2002. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 15. *Fringe*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 16. *Freeze*, 2006. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 17. *Vespucci Discovering America*, Theodore Galle (1600) after Jan vander Straet. Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

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