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# UN-DONE

The historiographical  
dialogue between  
past and present

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## **Un-Done: The Historiographical Dialogue Between Past and Present**

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Due to the Covid-19 crisis the theses were approved by Program Directors, and are often  
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## **Abstract**

Art critic for *The Nation* and professor of at Columbia, Arthur C. Danto led the charge with his essay “The End of Art” in 1984 to declare the end of art. Thirty-eight years later, the awareness of colonial problematics in the elite institutionalism of art history today warrants a reanalysis of art historical ontologies of progress (and their ties to colonialism), which have seemingly disbanded in the discipline’s current rhetoric. Because Danto’s historical framework to end art focuses on progress through artistic means, does it fall short or even negate itself by missing the deconstruction of colonial afterlives still present in art institutionalism? Moreover, does Danto’s end to art ultimately reiterate colonial and imperial dictations over time, and thus undercut a historical futurity for “non-Western” “artists”? In comparing Danto’s theoretical discipline with the work of Titus Kaphar, Yuki Kihara, and Jason Garcia (Okuu Pin), I present a hypothetical dialogue between the art historical constructs of time and the present investment in decolonizing art with a critique through appropriation. Kaphar’s work underlines how representation can challenge the game of identity performance for the benefit of institutions, Kihara challenges the pervasive ignorance towards stereotyping Pacific Islanders by resisting and confusing the West-East binary boundaries, while Garcia challenges the hero complex historical figures still have in popular culture even if they are academically deconstructed. Ultimately, they perform a legitimacy to an end of Western hegemony that Danto alludes to.



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## Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgments	4
<b>Part 1</b>	
<i>Enough About You</i>	6
The End of Art?	12
Post-Historical Essentialism	19
<b>Part 2</b>	
Introduction	25
Titus Kaphar: Shifting the Frame(ing)	28
Yuki Kihara: Presenting the Pacific Pastiche	32
“Coconuts that Grew from Concrete”	33
Cross-examining Gauguin	37
Jason Garcia: <i>Tewa Tales of Suspense</i>	42
Two Branches of the Same Linear Tree	48
Epilogues: Relative Progresses	51
Bibliography	53
Illustrations	57

## Part 1

### Enough About You

*There should be an objective historical structure in which everything is possible. If everything is possible, nothing is historically mandated: one thing is, so to say, as good as another. And that in my view is the objective condition for post-historical art. There is nothing to be replaced: one can, to return to Warhol's phrase, be an abstract expressionist, or a pop artist, or a realist, or anything else.*

Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, 44.

*We can't bring ourselves actually to take away the artist's canvas, easel and paintbrush. That would be cruel. As for the artists themselves, if painting is dead, needless to say, they're more than happy to drag around the corpse for everyone to see.*

Nicole Davis, "A New Lease on Painting", Artnet.com.

The act of crumpling a painted canvas is usually an omen of discard, a future destined for the bin. But what if the opposite were true? What if that wadded draft is hung in the museum?

*Enough About You* (Figure 1) by Titus Kaphar provocatively and purposefully employs this

technique as a reconstruction of subjectivity from seventeenth and eighteenth century

Anglo-American portraiture. Where there was once a single plane of vision, now numerous dark

folds merge with the contorted bodies and undulating hem of the canvas. Only one small figure

remains untouched and set within a small frame: a young African boy. Kaphar bunched the rest

of the canvas around the frame like fabric around an embroidery hoop. Bright lighting and

saturation of the boy's face and coat downplays the flattened tones elsewhere. Whereas the two

wrinkled sets of eyes and hands follow the downcast creases, the young Black enslaved boy no

longer attends to the needs of his masters but stares directly at the audience. Kaphar has



repainted the boy without his neck collar, signaling his worth is longer bound to another person's assets.

Copied from a portrait of Yale's founding father, Elihu Yale, *Enough About You* was recently loaned to the Yale Center for British Art as a temporary replacement for the original: *Elihu Yale with Members of his Family and an Enslaved Child* (Figure 2). In this painting, Yale is seated as the head figure amongst his friends and family on a veranda including Lord James Cavendish, Dudley North, and David Yale. An African child looks back to the men with a bottle of wine, while in the surrounding garden, several of Yale's grandchildren play. While Kaphar's work was installed, a team assembled by the museum's director, Courtney Martin, compiled an archive's worth of material to regain knowledge of the boy's identity. A whole host of new details emerged about the painting and its primary subjects, but sadly the archival records revealed no documentation of the boy's identity.<sup>1</sup> The team's research review "New Light on the Group Portrait of Elihu Yale" and a corresponding video lecture includes information about Kaphar's painting, then proceeds to divulge a slew of Eurocentric details: the collars used to shackle Africans, Elihu Yale's collecting preferences, Yale's cousin's estate wealth, and the genealogy of the supposed painter John Verelst.<sup>2</sup> It seems to me that these reports focus on transparency, yet ultimately reiterates the power of the colonizer in neocolonial undertones. Unsurprisingly, this initiative came in the wake of not only the international protests after George

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<sup>1</sup>It is equally possible his visage comes from the painter's portrait studies rather than a person captive in Yale or his fellow sitters' servitude. As of October 2021, the original painting is back on display in the galleries. Because the Yale Center for British Art research team is still combing through international archives, the end result has a slim chance for their supposed goal of identifying the boy. Yale Center For British Art. "New Light on the Group Portrait of Elihu Yale, His Family, and an Enslaved Child" Accessed October 20, 2021.

<https://britishart.yale.edu/new-light-group-portrait-elihu-yale-his-family-and-enslaved-child>.

<sup>2</sup> Yale Center for British Art, "At home: Art in Context | New light on a portrait of Elihu Yale, his family, and an enslaved child" 39:12. May 6, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whHDCNLD8Ak>.

P. Floyd Jr.'s murder on May 25th, 2020, but Yale University campus criticism of this portrait of Elihu Yale depicting an enslaved child with a metal collar. Within this backlash, a campaign emerged with the hashtag #RECLAIMTHECHILD was plastered across campus.<sup>3</sup> Although there is another portrait of Yale with a collared, enslaved person in the YCBA's fellow museum—Yale University Art Gallery—there was no such outcry for their portrait, perhaps because their painting has been stored away (Figure 3). A YCBA student employee's remark with the words of Frederick Douglass, "Power concedes nothing without a demand", stresses how the museum's need to reframe the depiction of one Black child coincided with a college-wide discrepancy over the display of this particular portrait.<sup>4</sup>

Exchanging the founder's portrait for Kaphar's crumpled canvas was arguably the only decolonial action to occur in this process for the YCBA, even though the switch occurred amidst closed doors for safety precautions with the COVID-19 pandemic. Ironically, the museum's decolonization process for the original portrait relies on the labor of bodies of color in the present, whether that be Kaphar's painting as a mediator or the students' urgent voices calling for removal. While the attempt to unveil the boy's identity considers a larger argument of whether slavery and other traumatizing themes in colonial imagery should be preserved, engaged, censored, taken down, or packed away altogether, Kaphar shifted the framing — including the frame — of this painting. He did what the YBCA did not: reflected the prismatic structure of the argument by employing techniques that would value and memorialize the boy, dissect the undertones of colonial power in art history, while minimizing the ego of (Elihu) Yale. Kaphar's

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<sup>3</sup> Fang, Claire Ning. "INSIGHT: Enough About Yale." Yale News. October 14, 2021. <https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2021/10/14/insight-enough-about-yale/>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. The original quote stems from Douglas's speech "*West India Emancipation*." Transcript of speech delivered at Canandaigua, New York, August 4th, 1857. <https://archive.org/details/ASPC0001937700/page/n19/mode/2up>.

canvas is as much about memory as it is rejection, but asks the viewer to reconsider the implications of both through a different pair of eyes. Minute details of wealth and status saturated in the visual language are made to disappear within the folds of the canvas: all of the figures, including Yale's children and his compatriots become anonymous alongside the African boy. Kaphar's own position shares how this appropriation of the past becomes extremely personal and relevant to the present: "If we don't amend history by making new images and new representations, we are always going to be excluding ourselves."<sup>5</sup> This personal relationship to art history's ethics is shared by a new generation of artists who disrupt an institutional teleology by using appropriation to confront the afterlives and survival methods of colonial representation in art historical narration.<sup>6</sup> As is revealed in Yale University's temporary painting swap, these new works offer principles for decolonizing art history but can get mixed up in the politics of institutions aiming for diversity and inclusion in their collections but missing the point of decolonization.

If Kaphar's terminology of "amending history" and the hashtag's term of "reclaiming" shows the awareness of colonial problematics in the elite institutionalism of art history today, it also warrants a reanalysis of art historical ontologies of progress (and their ties to colonialism), which have seemingly disbanded in the discipline's current rhetoric. The changes to art history from the twentieth to the twenty-first century have largely been informed by post-configurational thought (i.e. Postmodernism and Postcolonialism) which unlike their titles suggest, critique

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<sup>5</sup> Gagosian. "Titus Kaphar." Accessed October 29, 2021. <https://gagosian.com/artists/titus-kaphar/>.

<sup>6</sup> By using the term generation, I wish to avoid the art historiographical tradition of linking people, markets, and styles into a singular heading, i.e. Cubism, Fauvism, Surrealism, etc. Instead the term connects artistic aims across time, while location, heritage, and acclaim are less important.



rather than terminate their respective predecessors.<sup>7</sup> They signify an exhaustion of historical certainty and a need to destabilize grandiose prescriptions of progress. Art critic for *The Nation* and professor of at Columbia, Arthur C. Danto led the charge with his essay “The End of Art” in 1984 to declare art had “lost any historical direction.”<sup>8</sup> He would go on to publish several books crucial to the subject: *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (1986), *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (1992), and *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (1997). His post-historical perspective offered the Art world a place for Postmodernism and postmodernity to become the forefront of standard discussion, and his observations of an end of art have held significant weight for moving art history from a dichotomy of Western art and the periphery to a pluriversal state of the Art world.<sup>9</sup> This pluriversal state seemingly lacks the narrow minded vision of progress of art making

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<sup>7</sup> Several transcultural markers also shifted these knowledge relations as well but veer too close to neomodern and neocolonial territory: the Brandt Line of global North and South (1989), “Magiciens de la Terre” at the Centre Pompidou (1989), and the 500-year anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s arrival to the Caribbean (1992).

<sup>8</sup> Lang, *The Death of Art*, 7. Within the spectrum of texts relating to the position of proclaiming an end and are written by Danto’s contemporaries is Hans Belting’s *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and *Art History After Modernism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), and Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Here I introduce several terms which seem to correlate but can easily become confusing- post-historical, Postmodernism, postmodernity, and contemporary. It is primarily crucial to understand how they are used to consider time differently, with the prefix post-. In general, post configurations designate where a state of operation in a discipline or mindset shifts and reacts through deconstruction. Imperatively, it is impossible to state a post configuration as a full closure that is universally agreeable (and thus where Danto’s ending becomes confusing since philosophy deals so often in absolutes). One may also ask when capitalization becomes important. Here, where a term is specifically capitalized I am either referring to an art historical period (Modernism, Postmodernism), or terminology used to describe the entity as a whole rather than prismatically looking at its parts (Art world versus art world). While Danto did not coin the term Art world, his text “The Art World” (*The Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 19 (1964), 571–84.) is crucial to the term’s popularization, and he preferred the term post-historical over Postmodernism (Danto, Arthur C., and Lydia Goehr. *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014, 12). The pluralized version of Art world, art worlds, has also become popular to emphasize that global constructions are not universal. For further reading, see Weibel, “The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds. Globalization and Contemporary Art” *Tranznazionale* 1, 1 (March 2017), and *The End of the Art World* by Robert C. Morgan, (New York, NY: Allworth Press, 1998). Note that modernity and modernism and modern (capitalized or not) are not interchangeable. Because this thesis evaluates time constructs and deconstructs the linear blind spots of progress in time, the same constructs and blind spots of defining these terms above can and should be questioned.

because it avoids unified visions of what art should be, who makes it, and a direction those objects and ideas should progress to. It instead relies on artwork as a vehicle for philosophical experimentation. However, it is imperative to ask if an artistic necessity to re-engage colonial and imperial aesthetics unveils that the post-historical framework still needs to progress in an equitable fashion: because Danto's historical framework to end art focuses on progress through artistic means, does it fall short or even negate itself by missing the deconstruction of colonial afterlives still present in art's institutionalism? Moreover, does Danto's end to art ultimately reiterate colonial and imperial dictations over time, and thus undercut a historical futurity for "non-Western" artists? By examining some of these works in parallel to Danto's propositions, a hypothetical dialogue emerges between constructs of time and historiography; philosophical and artistic praxes. The aim is not to derive a black and white conclusion of whether Danto's theory is flawless, but to consider how this kind of juxtaposition can render a more anti-colonial praxis for both disciplines. The first half of the thesis will provide the context of Danto's end of art, while the latter half opens up the dialogue through artwork. The three artists and their work selected here— Titus Kaphar, Yuki Kihara, and Jason Garcia— present incredibly resonant experiences in the application of appropriation and its kin, simulacra, to dissect and deconstruct the colonial overtones in the reciprocal entities of art: history, theory, and philosophy. Within this practice, the turn in historiography from the end of art theory to post-historical, i.e. Postmodern art re-presents temporal constructions as rotational, or even cyclical while creating "new" things out of the process. Because these artists are attempting to actualize a past-colonial (not postcolonial) art world,<sup>10</sup> they present our current state of framing time (the capitalized

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<sup>10</sup> Art world is not capitalized here because it reflects the individual perspective of the artist and the range of their impact.

Contemporary) as an artistically-written epilogue to an outdated volume of art history. Art history, or rather past art history, becomes undone while a futurity of art becomes fully present.

### **The End of Art?**

*In one sense art is finished, Danto claims, because it has nowhere else to go, which is at once less and more than Hegel had claimed. It is less because Danto believes the great subjects remain, but the means to their exploration are exhausted; and it is more because Danto has a far more articulated understanding than did Hegel of the evolution of the material arts.*

Richard Kuhns, "The End of Art?", 41.

Before turning to explanations of Danto's arguments around the end of art it is worth noting the foundational philosophical character of Danto's theories: Hegel. In observing the limits of these frontiers, Danto recognized in Hegel the correlative turn of consciousness; so in order to understand the basis of Danto's claims, it is necessary to briefly examine Hegel's dialectics.

In constructing a philosophical structure in which art is tied with religion and philosophy, Hegel rigorously expounded upon how to define art and render its progress, seen in his university lectures on aesthetics. Although the posthumous publication by his student Heinrich Gustav Hotho in 1835 that would become *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* consisted of compiled lecture notes and student notes, it solidified Hegel as a patriarch of art philosophy.<sup>11</sup> Successive thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Jacques Derrida, and Arthur Danto used Hegel as a guide to elucidate various aesthetic positions of beauty and taste. The primary discord still problematized from

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<sup>11</sup> According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy webpage "Hegel's Aesthetics", there is not yet a solid understanding of Hotho's methods of compiling, sorting, and personal additions to these lecture notes which would distort our understanding of Hegel's original ideas. It is also certainly a disadvantage to read Hegel's published works through translated English. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-aesthetics/>



these lectures is Hegel's implications of the end of art (as well as the "end of history" in his posthumously published *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*). Within the Introduction to *Aesthetics* he states: "Art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our *ideas* instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place."<sup>12</sup>

What followed was a complex examination of ideals and the nature of art followed by the establishment of the Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic epochs. This established a formula of progress and evolution to relate changes in art based on their fulfillment of prescriptive definitions of aesthetics, but would an eventual climax in this sequence leave any room for a hereafter according to Hegel? What constitution of art ends for Hegel and why?

Instead of concentrating on the inference of art ceasing to exist entirely, his additional designations in this quote lead the way for us to examine the specifics of termination. A direct answer would take "end" and "art" at face value and full value — *livor mortis for ars longa vita brevis est* — as if "end" implied death. Indeed, many philosophers, critics and artists alike have declared art and its entities to be dead, as if they were the augurs and morticians to a life system independent of human production.<sup>13</sup> These proclamations are never considered omniscient or

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<sup>12</sup> He additionally states: "We may well hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection, but the form of art has ceased to be the supreme need of the Spirit. No matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek gods, no matter how we see God the Father, Christ, and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed: it is no help, we bow the knee, no longer [before these artistic portrayals]." *Hegel's Aesthetics*, 11, 103.

<sup>13</sup> See the above quote from Nicole Davis. The circumscribed author of *The Satiricon*, Gaius Petronius Arbiter wrote "The fine arts had died and [the art of] painting...had left no trace of itself behind." (*The Satiricon*, trans. William Arrowsmith (New York: New American Library, 1983), 205.) Garth Clark infamously declared "Craft is dead, long live craft." ("How Envy Killed the Crafts." in *The Craft Reader*, edited by Glenn Adamson. London, UK: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018, 445-453) Comedian Bo Burnham dedicated a song to it ("Art is Dead." *Words Words Words*, Comedy Central Records, 2010.) Critics like Harold Bloom have tried to save the established art forms from the "rant and nonsense" of the experimental. (Barber et al. "The Man in the Back Row Has a Question: VI." *Paris Review* 42 (Spring): 2000, 379.) Philosopher Henri Lefebvre even went as far as to proclaim the assailants: "If socialism is compromising art, and perhaps even killing it by recklessly politicizing it, capitalism and the bourgeoisie are killing it by considering it solely as a firmly ingrained need which can be enjoyed on a purely

universally recognized; in fact, when someone makes these edicts of death or ending, we must question whether their intent is to paradoxically stop a growing avant-garde form from remaking their lofty discipline. Hegel's introductory quote connects a transition of art between one realm of belief (religion) and another (philosophy). His sense of objectivity and empirical reasoning of history certainly do not imply universality, and when considering the context, his quoted end to art is more specific. Taking into account that during his lifetime, France entered into full rebellion from royalty and church and the Holy Roman Empire disintegrated, two major factions upholding the religious ties to European aesthetics collapsed. However, this geographical center correlates to a loophole within the interpretations of Hegel's seemingly universal opinions: "The *Christian* view of truth is of this kind [of truth beyond art's capability of expression], and, above all, the spirit of *our* world today, or, more particularly, of *our* religion and the development of *our* reason, appears as beyond the stage at which art is the supreme mode of *our* knowledge of the Absolute."<sup>14</sup> Art having passed thus signaled not a funeral pyre of all art but a detachment with the expression of spirit so prominent in Hegel's Romantic stage: religion, specifically Christianity. Furthermore, Danto's interpretation of Hegel's pronouncement considers what may have gone without saying between contemporaries: "This [art's ending] must have come as an immense disappointment to his hearers, for German artists felt themselves poised on the

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physical level and ruthlessly exploited." (*Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes, September 1959-May 1961*, translated by John Moore, London: Verso, 1995, 277.) Danto however called this death of art "an overstatement" and recalled that his prominence in the book *The Death of Art* had complicated the reception of his own beliefs (*The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, 81; *After the End of Art*, 4).

<sup>14</sup> I would add that there are convincing responses to navigating Hegelian thought amongst our own perceptions of universality, freedom, race, and colonialism through the work of Susan Buck-Morss's *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005) and Timothy Brennan's *Borrowed Light: Vico, Hegel and the Colonies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014). In my limited time of researching Hegel, it is clear that there are enough shifts in thought to register some kind of change to his views on these topics. *Hegel's Aesthetics*, 10. Emphasis added.

threshold of a new civilization in which art would play as fundamental role as it had in Ancient Greece.”<sup>15</sup> Danto’s point stresses just how essential progress was to the ideals of modeling European civilization.<sup>16</sup> Hegel’s end to art marks the consequential moment he saw a shift of how artists were defining and producing meaning through the visual: it was progressing with a different trajectory, or end, in mind. In marking an “end” Hegel wasn’t referring to an apocalyptic event he was set against, but an overhaul of the system, a change in status quo which consequently manifested a future of artistic agency over philosophy after Hegel.

Knowing this, Danto recognised the correlation between Hegel’s reflections and his own observations as an art critic in the twentieth century. Danto frequently relied on Hegel throughout his writing although he occasionally voiced doubts on specific details of Hegel’s consistency. For example, Danto advocates Hegel is “greatly to be admired” but further on adds that Hegel “becomes confused and probably inconsistent” in answering “what exactly is *artistic* beauty when it is not aesthetic?”<sup>17</sup> It appears that Danto was not a staunch Hegelian but followed in his footsteps and found his theories complementary to interpreting the shifting planes of artistic Modernism and emerging post-identities.

As often as Danto refers to and examines the modern art movements through Hegel’s perspective, there is a subtle but consequential difference between their configurations. Hegel, identifying his present as fully in the Romantic period, increasingly noted the secularized freedom in representation. Art’s ties to religion had snapped. This is where Danto knew to begin: “There could now be a developmental story to tell, but it would be the story, as it were, of a

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<sup>15</sup> Danto, “Why does Art Need to be Explained?”, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Progress”. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/progress/>

<sup>17</sup> Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art*. Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2003, 93.



progressive degree of *philosophical* adequacy.”<sup>18</sup> As mentioned above, Hegel categorized his timeline into theoretical principles: Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic; Danto had to look beyond Hegel’s time through the lens of Modernism as Hegel’s future and Danto’s past. While some artists in Danto’s timeframe aimed for the essence of art in the abstract, minimal, and conceptual, Danto saw that others simultaneously pursued mimesis (the pursuit of imitating reality to the point of invisibility) with fervor. Once Andy Warhol revealed his *Brillo Box* in 1964, replicating the American household cleaning scrubbers, Danto believed that art had accomplished a state of absolute mimetic character and the goal of achieving unrecognizability from the commonplace and the concept. What was now unnecessary in art? Nothing. Art could not only follow a different trajectory but also erupt from its state of subtraction into an explosion of pluralism.

The Art world was not alone in this endeavor. In 1979, five years before Danto’s seminal essay, the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard coined the term “postmodern” explaining “I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it.”<sup>19</sup> This term— metanarrative— reflects any predominant view of the world that would claim to be universally applicable. Once the progress paradigm was in question, multiple, alternate understandings would undoubtedly emerge. Danto created a similar understanding with his own term: post-historical art.<sup>20</sup> Rather than reflecting the turn from modernity into post-modernity, he looked deeper into progress as an

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<sup>18</sup> *After the End of Art*, 66. This correlates with Hegel’s claim that art “has rather been transferred into our *ideas*.” as noted above.

<sup>19</sup> Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1984, xxiv.

<sup>20</sup> This is noted throughout his texts. In *After the End of Art* he writes “Anything ever done could be done today and be an example of post-historical art.”, 12.

absolute of historical function. If there was no direction to progress, there could be no direction to history, and thus no direction to understanding the functions of art.

If these philosophers would tie metanarratives to their post configurations, this leads to an inevitable question: what *kind* of metanarrative to art is Danto referring to and subsequently ending? Is it the same as Hegel's? Danto's original chapter "The End of Art" outlines a particular narrative through the claim: "So *art* will have a future, it is only that *our* art will not. *Ours* is a form of life that has grown old."<sup>21</sup> The designation "our" could imply a universal selection, but among the covert yet matter-of-fact constructs in art's history is the racially charged culture profiling in the midst of transitioning the standard definitions of art.<sup>22</sup> Professor Emeritus Larry Shiner's book, *The Invention of Art*, reports on art history's construct of art as an invention. In a matter of centuries, Europeans transformed and delimited art so that any cultural alternative could either be dismissed or improved upon by the West. The pronounced (and inadequate and racist) heritage from ancient Greek to Hegel's Europe disparaged narratives in the peripheral world. Additionally, Shiner consciously repeals the fallacy of familiarizing the past to fit current perceptions of art. We know that Danto approved of Shiner's revelations because his shining review of it appears on the back cover.<sup>23</sup> With this context, designating "our art" therefore forms

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<sup>21</sup> Emphasis included. Again, note the similar adjectival use of whose art Danto refers to with Hegel's quote above starting with "The Christian view of truth". "The End of Art" in *The Death of Art*, edited by Beryl Lang, 5-35. New York, NY: Haven Publications, 1984, 27.

<sup>22</sup> Rather than begin the education of art history with how it is constructed, standard academic textbooks and coursework still value these linear progress models from prehistoric to contemporary. Since at this point in time, art academia and knowledge production is reliant on the globalizing factor for the purposes of diversity and inclusion, the way art history was constructed becomes a boring sideline of information not relevant to the very foundation of its teaching.

<sup>23</sup> Mitch Avila also makes a comparative analysis of between the two scholars in his book review, noting "The comparison with Danto's influential narrative is illuminating, because whereas Danto wants to tell a story about 'the modern system of art as the outcome of an inevitable evolution,' Shiner sees it as an 'eighteenth-century invention' (p.14)." Avila, review of *The Invention of Art*, written by Larry Shiner, (*The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 61, no.4 (Autumn, 2003): 401-403. Accessed January 5, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1559075>).

a group by which its extension also excludes. The historical paradigm of modernity (that geographically situated progress as a Western tradition) was only one narration of defining progress in the world, but Danto realized it was on the verge of exhausting its power. With a synchronous dissolution of hegemonic control over art and history, an end was clearly inevitable.

Danto's philosophical aims to develop theory and his job as an art critic overlapped in his writing. He specialized in observing the American art scene through the lens of the canon, so in terms of theorizing an end of art, that designation of "our art" has another subset. While this focus as an art critic gave him depth, philosophically his theories lacked breadth.<sup>24</sup> Contextually, the advent of globalizing art history was burgeoning but not fully realized between 1984 and 1997 when these works were published. Therefore the characterization of *world art* perhaps best describes Danto's experience: Anglo-American in perspective, geographically multicultural where compelling in a centric metanarrative or favorable for comparison. While this representation is not neutral it applies to the following discussion of whether this end of art acts as a component to reclaim the contemporary artistic time and purpose of so-called peripheral Others, or to ignore it as another colonial authorization of time and purpose.

In conclusion, the primary continuum between Hegel's philosophy and Danto's surrogate art theory relates art to a system of progress and confines its intentions to render some form of purified answer to the question of what art should do. In Danto's vision, the progress of art's metanarrative pursued mimetic invisibility, to become anything and everything. The following sections outline how this singular view of time presents both problems and solutions to addressing colonialism, past and present.

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<sup>24</sup> To Danto's credit this is a problem which is still hard to comprehend, let alone attempt.

## Post-Historical Essentialism

*Unlike their multicultural or postcolonial predecessors, the new impresarios and self-proclaimed experts of Otherness are no longer interested in the articulation of the tensions and clashes in cultures. They no longer wish to discuss issues of power and privilege. They know better. They don't want their neocolonial positionality questioned by angry primitives and strident women... Besides, what they really want is to market Otherness, not to understand it.*  
Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Theatricalizations of Postcolonial Theory", 251.

*Prehistory. History. Posthistory. It is evidence of the arrogance of Occidental culture and discourse that even the concept of history should be turned into a colony whose borders, validities, structures and configurations, even life tenure are solely and entirely decided by the West...If time is a colony, then nothing is free.*  
Olu Oguibe, "In the 'Heart of Darkness'", 320.

If Danto saw an end of art as both post-historical and open to all possibilities, the artistic gravitation towards appropriation of popular, canonical, and archival materials aligns with the theory, but the need to deconstruct the past through appropriation implies there is more than one aspect to the end of art theory manifesting. Danto's astute observations that art was now anything and everything was a declaration of freedom, but if art history was tied to colonialism as much as philosophy, then wouldn't freedom have to involve more than an absence of definition? In reference to his original essay "The End of Art" Danto said, "I felt that my view meant a liberation from the tyrannies of history."<sup>25</sup> One crucial distinction he did not cover in his theory was the difference between proclaiming this liberation and actualizing it. While Danto's opinion

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<sup>25</sup> *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992, 229.

was a signal of freedom, it still created a double bind to preference exclusionist history as the temporal conditions to create pluralistic modes of being.<sup>26</sup> It assumed a conceit of completion for art as a whole while parading Western art as the prime agent of that purpose. More than a recognition of Europe's erosion from the center of modernity, would a termination of progress signal an absence of futurity for everyone else? What was left for the non-Western world to accomplish artistically that the West had not already?

Evidence in Danto's own work of this is hard to come by, perhaps because postcolonialism as a field was still developing in the later half of Danto's life.<sup>27</sup> What he does state is that "Contemporary art, by contrast [to Modernism], has no brief against the art of the past, no sense that the past is something from which liberation must be won, no sense even that it is at all different as art from modern art generally. It is part of what defines contemporary art that the art of the past is available for use as artists care to give it. What is not available to them is the spirit in which the art was made."<sup>28</sup> This last statement includes appropriation as a crucial component to contemporary art, but as a whole suggests that unlike Modernism's rejections to the previous paradigms, contemporary art has nothing to reject. Instead, the contemporaneous writings and exhibitions of several artists in the 1990s and early 2000s popularized the need for conscious exploration of liberation from historiographical paradigms. Their work stimulated and facilitated a powerhouse movement of artists entering the receptive fields (those that engaged with art after its initial production) to offer an expository lens of disciplinary blind spots. I note

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<sup>26</sup> My aim is not to deduce that Danto is the perpetrator of a neocolonial art world. I don't think the complexity of Danto's theory should be reduced to one thing or another, but because of its influence, it can now be analysed for what it doesn't do or ends up creating as much as what it aims to do.

<sup>27</sup> I determined this by examining the indexes of his major publications for the terms colonialism and postcolonialism. I look forward to examining the upcoming release *Art and Posthistory: Conversations on the End of Aesthetics*, to see if Danto did address this question outside his major publications.

<sup>28</sup> *After the End of Art*, 5.

below the seminal works of three key artists contemporaneous to Danto. While these three artists should need no introduction, I present the pinnacles of their achievements to emphasize how, despite its open-ended perceptions, this post-historical configuration was a false positive: it didn't factor the hubris or fertile grounds of colonial metanarrative into a position of artistic limitations. Even if Danto recognized that art was now free, the artists still had to counter numerous social impediments in Western centrality.

Fred Wilson's "Mining the Museum" exhibit at the Maryland Historical Society in 1992 marked a major turn from this belief of a Western centrality by introducing the violent objects of colonialism alongside the supposed passive works of art and craft. As museums and archives had long overseen this focused vision of progress, the move from a hegemonic metanarrative to the reveal of the colonial impact in said metanarrative meant shocking the system with its own past. With ornate armchairs seated to face a whipping post, runaway reward posters mounted above a gaming gun, and the metalwork of slave shackles surrounded by a silver set of drinking vessels, Wilson displayed the ominous and unsightly objects with the opulent trophies of the collection to merge their histories as one. Viewer responses of the exhibit ranged from "The worst and most racist display I have ever seen in a museum!" and "A museum should inspire interest and answer questions, not raise questions unrelated to the subject." but also "This is probably the type of activity Maryland Historical should try" and "Make this a museum for all people, we all played an important part of Maryland history."<sup>29</sup> If Wilson sought to rattle and upend the status quo of a colonial narrative, it also moved the performance of decolonizing straight into the art institutions. According to contemporary art theorist Anthony Gardner, "Such racialized modalities risked

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<sup>29</sup> Wilson, Fred and Lisa Corrin. *Mining the Museum: An Installation Confronting History*. New York: The New Press, 1994, 61, 69, 70, 67.

informing a new battleground: a battle over who had the authority to revise and rethink pasts, and especially histories of violence, that had arguably been shared by both the oppressor and the oppressed.”<sup>30</sup> Adversely, the bodies of the colonized or their work could now operate as the decolonizing benchmark for museums. Where there could be a critical decentralization in narrative, the double bind of inclusion for people of color could also transpire.

For Guillermo Gómez-Peña, resisting Western centrality has always utilized a radical pedagogy of parody, storytelling, ritual, and performance to confuse and question the status quo. Appropriation within performance in Gómez-Peña’s case is less about precise copying so that the sign and symbol of the appropriated can be called into question. In many cases, the distorted caricatures created in these performances seem to be an appropriation not of Latin American cultures but the Western display of exoticism and orientalism in canonical art.

Like Wilson, Gómez-Peña has collaborated with other museums to perform thought experiments: his seminal stagings with Coco Fusco, *Couple in the Cage: Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* at various venues palpably disturbed the unconscious racism of cultural display by feigning so-called tribal identities without telling the audience. As members of the imaginary Guatinaui, they enacted various everyday scenarios or interacted with the audience for a fee. Confined with assorted modern technologies and layering materials like furs and rafia skirts with commercially produced garments, Fusco and Gómez-Peña appeared to be trying out modernity for the first time. These false narratives as portrayed through their regalia were enough to resemble a reality for the audience that the trope became the collective fascination of exotic humans on display, recalling the “human zoos” of the nineteenth and

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<sup>30</sup> Gardner, Anthony. “Whither the Postcolonial?” in *Global Studies: Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture*, edited by Hans Belting and Julia T. S. Binter, 142-157. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2012, 146.



twentieth centuries in America and Europe. Originally performed at the Walker Art Center in 1992, they added another layer to the performance by staging it in the five hundred year anniversary of Columbus's transatlantic crossing. Museum docents spouted fake information about the couple and hawked the opportunity to get up close for a photo after paying a fee.<sup>31</sup> The viewer was meant to question their own role in demonizing the colonized body and the relationship between colonizer and constructing the primitive body. In creating the performance as a satire, Gómez-Peña seriously challenged the binaries of primitive and modern while orienting the consciousness of representation through objectification.

The last artist, Rasheed Araeen, has spent almost six decades pursuing the craft of minimalism, sculpture, curation and more. Although Araeen's artistic endeavors have produced volumes of work and international exhibitions, his literary criticism, especially the founding of the art journal *Third Text. Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture* in 1987 has arguably had the largest impact on the global politics of the Art world. *Third Text* was formed with the purpose to decenter the colonial hegemony of art by dissecting global politics and amplifying the scholarship that divested from a center-periphery model. In the 1999 book *Views of Difference: Different Views of Art*, Araeen elaborated on his own past experiences divesting from an othering subjectification:

My entry into and taking up a radical position in the history of modernism was due to my experience of myself as a free subject. But this created a problem for the dominant cultural theory and western art institutions. They could not accept the idea that a person from outside western culture could be a free agent of history and could, in fact, intervene by challenging prevailing ideas in a particular time in modern history and produce something that may represent a historical breakthrough. This problem is due to the fact that art institutions in the West, as I

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<sup>31</sup>Paula Heredia and Coco Fusco, "The Couple in the Cage: Guatınai Odyssey", 1993. Single Channel Color Video, Authentic Documentary Productions, 31:00. Youtube Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv26tDDsuA8>.

have explained before, have not yet abandoned the concept of art history and its ‘Grand Narrative’ that was established as part of the colonial world view, particularly the prevailing Hegelian model of art history according to which only a European could be an agent of artistic progress. Within this model, I had no place as a free agent but only as the ‘other’, whose role was to provide the European ‘self’ with an affirmation of his or her central role in (modern) history.<sup>32</sup>

This view actually marked postcolonialism as a paradox which could equally separate a person from their local experiences by producing a globally recognized status and preserve the space in which to mark their culture as foreign. In this pursuit Araeen noted how the institutional dilemma of inclusion produced “A new framework— multiculturalism— by which the ‘other’ artist can be kept outside mainstream art history and at the same time promoted and celebrated on the basis of his or her cultural difference. In other words, multiculturalism is now [*sic*] a new institutional strategy of containment.”<sup>33</sup> Subtle, yet calculated, the institutions had created a tension within recognizing inclusion.

Each of these artists dedicated decades of work towards the decentralization of art history and the exposition of the Western art as continuously colonial and imperial (and continue to do so). Interestingly, the more provocative they made their displays, the more sought-after they became. However, their foundations of praxis to “seize the dynamic of history again, its modernity, and locate themselves within it” as Araeen so eloquently phrases, began to tackle the loopholes in Danto’s end of art. In this praxis they extended their positions to include being critics, curators, historians, philosophers, and so on. Artists and scholars in the receptive fields

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<sup>32</sup> Araeen coincidentally yokes Hegel to a colonial art history here. I have already noted the texts which navigate the complexity and postcolonial possibilities through Hegelian theory (14). Instead, Araeen’s awareness in 1999 that Western art institutions dictated agents of progress through Hegelian dialectics asserts how acceptable this particular interpretation of Hegel was for the Art World. “The Artist as a Post-colonial Subject and This Individual’s Journey Toward ‘the Centre’”, in *Views of Difference: Different Views of Art*. Catherine King, ed. 231-255. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999, 242.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 233.

noted this shift in praxis and embraced the movement into their fold as “The Artist as [insert receptive field here]”.<sup>34</sup> While this suggests that perhaps there is a decrease in value for the scholars and critics like Danto who are looking at artistic praxis from the outside in, it explains how a post-historical theory can coincide with essentialism. The first claims to free art from any given set of attributes or qualities; the second requires it. In the decades after these seminal works, the next three artists display a range of work which continues to inquire the nature of colonialism in the contemporary like their forerunners.

## Part 2

### Introduction

*It is not enough to accept the position of the colonized, it is necessary to be loved by them.*  
Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 37.

While Danto’s philosophy of ending art and post-historicism is a double-edged sword, there is a fascinating avenue from which to explore the actualization of post-historical philosophy. Titus Kaphar, Yuki Kihara, and Jason Garcia’s creative endeavors fit especially well for uncovering the double binds synthesized within Danto’s end of art theory, post-historical speculations, and the Art world’s navigation of leaving a history of art in the past.<sup>35</sup> That is, the people who create decolonizing works emphasize positions beyond a linear timeline of (art)

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<sup>34</sup> A few examples of this are as follows: Celina Jeffery, *The Artist as Curator* (Bristol, UK: Intellect Ltd, 2015); Judith S. Schwartz, *Confrontational ceramics: The Artist as Social Critic* (London, UK: A & C Black, 2008); Mark Godfrey, “The Artist as Historian”, *October*, no. 120 (Spring 2007): 140-172; Sydney P. Albert, “Bernard Shaw: The Artist as Philosopher,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 14, no. 4 (June 1956), 419–438; and Zachary Cahill and Philip von Zweck. “The Artist as Double Agent,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 36, no. 1 (Summer 2014): 64–73.

<sup>35</sup> The works of Betty Tompkins, Omar Diop, Shahzia Sikander, Gregg Deal, Meleko Mokgosi, Harmonia Rosales, and Wendy Red Star were equally appealing to this discussion for their similar use of appropriation of the popular, canonical, and archival.

history, but their accord and recognition also puts them into contact with the art institutions which still have the task of divesting from colonialism in their own collections and displays. Their identities as Black, Samoan-Japanese, and Native American register strong cultural connections to the subjects they are appropriating and portraying, even if these subjects were originally framed in a colonial lens.<sup>36</sup> Crucially, each of these artists have reached a level of international acclaim where they counter the outdated modes of center-periphery subjectivity noted by Araeen. They can act as “free agents” even though their works may take on a different role once inside a collection. Most importantly, each of their representations challenge a particular continuation of the center-periphery models necessary to maintain colonial hegemony in the Art world. Kaphar’s work underlines how representation can challenge the game of identity performance for the benefit of institutions, Kihara challenges the pervasive ignorance towards stereotyping Pacific Islanders by resisting and confusing the West-East binary boundaries, while Garcia challenges the hero complex historical figures still have in popular culture even if they are academically deconstructed.<sup>37</sup>

These artists share the need to reopen the history books and rewrite them, yet each of them construct, splice, and render their creations by distinct means of research and process. By collectively using appropriation as a methodology, they critique the means by which colonialism has continued in the Art world. Appropriating tropes or other works of art was and is commonplace, even expected of makers across the world to understand technique, master genre or provoke familiarity behind a new idea or concept. Appropriation and its relative sampling

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<sup>36</sup>It is important to consider how an expectation in which these artists and their peers should only make work relevant to cultural proximity is reductive and inequitable. That these artists do have such strong cultural proximity to their subjects is simply a point here from which to engage a larger challenge of art history and decolonization.

<sup>37</sup> It is worth contemplating how each artist participates in the other two factors as well.

offer unlimited possibilities for mixing genre, inserting representation, and/or creating fantastical imagery but must be considered ethically in light of the current debates surrounding cultural appropriation.<sup>38</sup> In the sonic arts, sampling requires a mapping of style and subsequent understanding of the larger relationships surrounding one clip or beat. Sampling sound is often repetitive and genealogical, but does not necessarily follow the forerunning ideological perspectives as copying lyrics would. Transferred to the spatial arts, sampling paintings from textbook art history or hidden archival material opens a dialogue between people and time. However, appropriation may assert or deny value regardless of including it in another work. As discussed with Kaphar's *Enough About You*, these artists are not attempting to recycle art because they believe their referents to be unblemished masterpieces, nor do they envision place and time as static or idealistic. The artists in this study ask more from their materials in order to question the indirect nature of narratives, reveal cultural inaccuracy, and point out past ideologies that linger in society today.

I must distinguish a few differences between the developments of sampling and appropriating work from the canon and archive. As stated above, the conscious nature of this act can serve as an analytical lens from which to judge, but it is not required. Thus, artists may appropriate or sample similar materials, but their individual value of the original can vastly diverge. It can also lead to distinct outcomes. For example, like Titus Kaphar, Kehinde Wiley also samples and appropriates from the imperial European oeuvre but assembles the compositions, materials, and ego of those historical times to repaint the urban as beautiful.

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<sup>38</sup> I primarily speak of the abuse and excuses to (poorly) perform closed cultural practices, blatantly stereotype indigenous peoples, and privilege ignoring historical points of cultural contention for individual preferences. Because cultural appropriation is a heated topic and open for debate, for the purposes of this thesis I will be referring to appropriation as simply a ubiquitous skill of copying valued throughout time in the making of art for various reasons; I am open to other understandings and boundaries between the two.

Where Wiley mimics the postures of prestige and inserts Black representation into European tropes as both power play and “visual inheritance”, Kaphar copies the old works and then reveals and incriminates the problematics of representation, sometimes marring the new painting beyond recognition.<sup>39</sup> Both value representation, but Kaphar highlights the perpetuity of the hidden, the unseen as much as the overt subject. In a Postmodern sense, both of these types of appropriation rely on the understanding of art history as a simulacrum: that in its power of representing art, it symbolically passes as the reality when it is actually a reproduction. In this understanding, the artist can engage multiple transactions of gazing, whether the relationship is between viewer and subject, subject and content, and subject and time. Their reproductions equally serve as a gauge to how the audience views the construction of history. Although none of these three artists produce work with Danto at the forefront of critical examination, sampling and appropriating works from the past three centuries dives into a framework of historiography which Danto relied on and produced.

### **Titus Kaphar: Shifting the Frame(ing)**

*Enough About You* is not Kaphar’s only work to focus on Yale: *Unfit Frame*, now in the Birmingham Museum of Art, references other portraits of Yale (Figure 4). With an MFA from Yale University, Kaphar’s repetition of repainting the patron assuredly was based on his exposure to Yale as a student. Canvas creeping out from the bottom of the frame, Kaphar positioned Yale’s open hand over the left corner as if to gesture to something beyond. The painting in frame is only half the story though: a broom is propped up from a stack of books and leans on the frame. What

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<sup>39</sup> This is not to imply that Wiley lacks critique in his work, only that he is analyzing European paintings and bringing different consequences to light. “Kehinde Wiley”, <https://kehindewiley.com>.

do these books convey about Yale? From top to bottom they contextualize the contribution of an individual into a woven framework of art history, expanding from *Elihu Yale: Merchant, Collector, and Patron* to *Modern American Painting*.<sup>40</sup> Sandwiched between, the material histories of diamonds, which Yale traded while stationed in India, and histories of the East India Company join to fill in his connections and wealthy status. A lone book on snuff boxes refers back to YCBA's collection of Yale portraits, but also the bridge between Yale's transmaritime orientation between the Americas, Britain, and India. It's almost if the stack of books summarizes the legacy of Yale, minimizing the critique of his wealth to establish the Ivy League from profiteering in colonial trade using slavery. But to sweep, to throw out also implies forgetting the history, a position Kaphar openly refutes.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the broom represents a temporal moment of sweeping the consequential elements of colonialism under the rug for the sake of legacy. The broom would not be a necessary tool of dismantling, but a master's tool, an institutional tool. Overall, the ambiguity of meaning in the broom only enriches the possibility of various relationships between the broom, the subject, the artist and the viewer. Multiple gazes are in action.

Danto's counterpart to post-historical theorizing, Hans Belting, observed how a condition-free theory could intersect with a critique of the past: "Contemporary art manifests an

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<sup>40</sup>Scarbrick, Diana and Benjamin Zucker. *Elihu Yale: Merchant, Collector and Patron*. 2014 and Boswell Jr., Peyton. *Modern American Painting*. 1920; The other books in order from top to bottoms are: Hart, Matthew. *Diamond: A Journey to the Heart of an Obsession*. 2001; Zoellner, Tom. *The Heartless Stone: a Journey through the World of Diamonds, Deceit, and Desire*. 2013; Edney, Matthew H. *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843*. 1999; Wild, Antony. *The East India Company: Trade and Conquest from 1600*. 2000; Le Corbeiller, Claire *European and American snuff boxes, 1730-1830*. 1983; Frost, John. *Pictorial History of America: From the Earliest Times to the Close of the Mexican War. Embracing the Most Remarkable Events which Have Transpired Since the Discovery*. 1853.

<sup>41</sup> Ladi'Shasha Jones, "An Interview with Titus Kaphar", New York Public Library. March 6, 2015. <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2015/03/06/interview-artist-titus-kaphar>



awareness of a history of art but no longer carries it forward.”<sup>42</sup> In light of the postmodern technique of creating simulacra, Kaphar’s idea of disfiguring artworks which seemingly acted as “historical documents” meant he could reference the past without perpetuating the conditions and values from which it was originally produced. In multiple interviews, Kaphar reiterates that not only is Anglo-American portraiture like Yales’ manufactured outside of reality, but “All of depiction is fiction, it’s only a question of degree... It’s a beautiful fiction to help us have an understanding of what went on,” and by proxy the embodied values of the time.<sup>43</sup> What distinguishes the original and reproduction in this contemporary context is the counter-appraisal and critique of the original presentation.

Rather than the ecstatic crumpling of the previous portraiture, the canvas of *Watching Tides Rise*, now in the Toledo Museum of Art, seems to want to come off the frame slowly and gently in time (Figure 5). The ship leans away from the gap between canvas and frame as if the rocking of the waves pulls it away from the curtain. Unlike Kaphar’s other crumpled reproductions, *Watching Tides Rise* samples from the seascape genre in colonial paintings. While there is no clear indication of where Kaphar intended or copied the scene from, it still mimics an entire genre from which the slave trade could be narrated or imagined.<sup>44</sup> The ship carries within it the significance of an Afrotrope, defined by Huey Copeland and Krista Thompson as “recurrent visual forms that have emerged within and become central to the formation of African

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<sup>42</sup> *The End of the History of Art?*, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Travel Noire. “Meet Titus Kaphar” Oct 19, 2021. <https://travelnoire.com/titus-kaphar-painter-racial-inequality>. Eloise Blondiau, “Amending American History with Titus Kaphar.” Interview, December 19, 2016. <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/titus-kaphar>.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Gilroy’s book, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London, UK: Verso, 2007) offers a much more detailed understanding of slavery’s ties to Modernism. To explore the various depictions of Atlantic seascapes, see Martin Sandler’s *Atlantic Ocean: The Illustrated History of the Ocean that Changed the World* (New York, NY: Sterling, 2008)

diasporic culture and identity.”<sup>45</sup> But which tide is rising? Is it the wrinkled waters on which the ship is sailing or perhaps the pilled black tar Kaphar has dipped the painting in? While he has used tar for multiple purposes (primarily to visualize layers of time and conceal bodies as a metaphor for protecting identity and flattening representation of Black people), there is a more insidious veneer to the material. Tar’s chemical properties made it resistant to water and therefore previously used to seal ship timber. Once across the ocean, Africans destined for the auction houses were primed with tar and grease to mask wounds and shine the skin for higher bids.<sup>46</sup> As the tar below rises out of the depths or perhaps separates from the waters of the Black Atlantic, the physical presence of tar also shadows the unarchived enslaved bodies lost to sea. As much as celestial bodies are necessary to change the tides, Kaphar’s seascape reminds us that in the present, Black bodies, whether artists, or scholars like Huey Copeland and Krista Thompson find the laboring to dismantle the afterlives of colonialism necessary to experiencing a life of unlimited possibilities.

In relating the movement across the seas as a passage not only through water but through time, ships connect the occasion of leaving something behind and arriving somewhere new. In relation to a theory of the end of art, Kaphar’s ship distinguishes a past narrative from the one he observes in watching “the tides” rise, i.e. the changes of power in his own lifetime. By combining the crumpling of the canvas with a depiction of object rather than portrait, Kaphar also echoes Fred Wilson’s investment in objects to relay a necessary shift in perpetuating a

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<sup>45</sup>Huey Copeland and Krista Thompson. “Afrotropes: A User’s Guide.” *Art Journal* 76, no. 3/4 (2017), 7. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45142663>.

<sup>46</sup> This is documented in firsthand accounts such as William Hutson’s (Yetman, Norman, ed., *Voices From Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives*, Rev. ed. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications Inc., 2000, 171.) The various technical terms, such as the various types of tar or fat are sometimes just noted as “grease”. Smearing animal fats inside the mouth before an auction was also practiced (Covey, Eisnach. *What the Slaves Ate: Recollections of African American Foods and Foodways from the Slave Narratives*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2009, 11).

colonial narrative through museum collections. Even though the artwork is now in the hands of a museum (The Toledo Museum of Art) it wrestles with an institutional preservation of narrative.

The three works analyzed here of Kaphar's "Crumpled" series provide a framework in which to ponder the continuation of colonial Black representation into the present through artwork, and one method in which to dismantle (and in the case of the YCBA, to literally take off the walls) a racist perception of Black being. By using appropriation to confront the afterlives of narrative in art history and the survival methods of colonial representation, Kaphar disrupts the slow transformation of art historical teleology in the post-historical as theorized by Danto. The paintings themselves cannot be ethically destroyed, but the colonial value to narrative in them can; in Kaphar's terms it is the key to changing the politics of the present. Kaphar's appropriation functions as "a disjunctive innovation that simultaneously announces its allegiance and affinity to the very tradition it seeks to displace."<sup>47</sup> His agency does not stem from Danto's "permission" or even authority to do anything, but his own need for enacting justice of the present in the lens of the past.

### **Yuki Kihara: Presenting the Pacific Pastiche**

*As with the 'exotic' marvels of Victorian collections and charming inasmuch as its creators had already been subject to colonial rule and many have also been introduced to permanent Christian unhappiness, contemporary art is frequently rendered powerless by our devoted and bureaucratic surge of tolerance. Conveniently displayed as another saleable 'cultural artifact' ready to be incorporated into the endless vitrines of the ethnographic museums or to the dusty bookshelves of academia, the artwork is stripped of its ability to unsettle the dominant world views and sociology-biological hierarchies.*

Cuauhtémoc Medina, "Preface: In the Shifting Sands of 'Postmodern' Relativism", 7.

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<sup>47</sup>Enwezor, Okwui. "The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition." *Research in African Literatures* 34, no. 4 (2003), 60. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4618328>.

*I remember thinking how strange it was to be in front of his [Gauguin's] paintings, as if time and space had collapsed. Here we were as artists from two different parts of the world having a dialogue in two different moments in history.*

Yuki Kihara, "First Impressions: Paul Gauguin", 169.

With both Sāmoan and Japanese ancestry, Yuki Kihara's lived cultural experience offers a view of art historical progress and narratives outside the American context.<sup>48</sup> By overlapping Pacific photography to European canonical art, she twists the expectation of defining culture and heritage by ethnographic stereotypes. Although her range of dance, curation, collage, and video mediums inform a global audience of Pacific Island heritage, she simultaneously uses the opportunity to educate others about the diverse histories of Samoa and ramifications of colonial control. Kihara's use of photography (whether it be her own production or archival research), is a particularly fascinating juxtaposition to the measures of progress used in art history.

### **"Coconuts that Grew from Concrete"**

Kihara's exhibition "Coconuts that Grew from Concrete" at the gallery Art Space Aotearoa in New Zealand and the recent reiteration at the Auckland Art Fair 2021 showed an assembly of interventive collages slicing recognizable European paintings with archival sepia prints of Pacific Island women.<sup>49</sup> The photographs are archival material from New Zealand

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<sup>48</sup> Previously named Shigeyuki Kihara, she has legally shortened the name to Yuki.

<sup>49</sup> Despite hours of library and online research through Google Image search and various photograph collections, it was incredibly difficult to trace the origins and collection spaces where many of these photographs are held. Rather than hindering my research, I was grateful that Kihara had conceptualized a space to think carefully about accessing the archive. With both photos here, I include a footnote of the location. Artspace Aotearoa. "Yuki Kihara: Coconuts that Grew From Concrete" Accessed October 23, 2021.

<https://www.artspace-aotearoa.nz/exhibitions/yuki-kihara-coconuts-that-grew-from-concrete>.

Milford Galleries Dunedin. "Auckland Art Fair, 2021" February 28, 2021.

<https://www.milfordgalleries.co.nz/dunedin/exhibitions/10716-Auckland-Art-Fair-2021?artist=232>.

nineteenth century studios; today they are held in museums, archives and personal collections across the world. Cutting the photographs explores the opportunity to match both halves to their counterparts and closely compare how composition and posture were (sub)consciously reproduced decades or centuries after the European paintings. Field photography and studio photography alike were considered mementos for European audiences; the subjects, whether transformed or in situ, were often chosen on exotic bodily features or curious accoutrements.<sup>50</sup>

While Kihara appropriates a variety of canonical paintings, from Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* to Vermeer's *Girl With a Pearl Earring*, her collages of Eugène Henri Paul Gauguin's paintings correlate to a thematic conversation with said artist in many of her works. They are especially relevant to discussions of defining artistic progress and a hypothetical dialogue with Danto's perspective. Gauguin's Tahitian paintings are notorious for depicting objects or human figures as a reference to allegorical questions (see Figure 8).<sup>51</sup> Remembered in terms of both his pioneering break from European aesthetic standards and as a exoticist degenerate who regarded the Pacific peoples as primeval and at his disposal, Gauguin's legacy continues to impact the Pacific Islands to this day. Gauguin's desire to leave Europe and not only settle in Polynesia but to mold himself as a native confuses the boundaries of reality and fantasy. Kihara is no stranger to this legacy as a Sāmoan. *Three Tahiti(Sāmo)ans (after Gauguin)* crops Gauguin's painting *Three Tahitians* and replaces the lower half of the male subject with a comparable photo of a Sāmoan man (Figure 6). Photographed by Thomas Andrew in the 1890s, the image focused on the tattoos covering his exposed lower back (captions at the bottom right in the photograph read

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<sup>50</sup> Nordström, Alison Devine. "Early Photography in Sāmoa: Marketing Stereotypes of Paradise." *History of Photography* 15, no. 4 (1991), 278-279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1991.10442504>.

<sup>51</sup> I use his full name as a modifying technique to re-register a European artist as more unfamiliar.

“Tattooed Samoan”).<sup>52</sup> Gauguin was not only familiar with this kind of photography, he was close enough to the source to appropriate these images directly into his paintings.<sup>53</sup> By analyzing these images in the collage separately, it is not only clear that the posture is the same, the men are noticeably alike. Gauguin paints his male without tattoos (and labels him as a Tahitian), and adds a strap of cloth around his buttocks. The uncanny resemblance of the men and the extreme contrast between painting and photo further emphasizes Titus Kaphar’s statement that imagery is never actually historical.

Another collage, *Sāmoan Waters (after Gauguin)* seems even more suspiciously duplicated; this is not a coincidence (Figure 7). Amidst the dense vegetation, a single figure reaches into a gully to drink water. Within the photograph, a cropped version of Gauguin’s painting *Mysterious Waters (Pape Moe)* fits squarely in the center.<sup>54</sup> The photographer, or perhaps merely the salesman of the photograph, Charles George Spitz is known to have lived in France and Tahiti during Gauguin’s lifetime; their relationship is unknown but their connection is solid. This photograph and photography in Gauguin’s time, although experimental and somewhat controversial for artistic use, provided a convenient and affordable medium to capitalize on the European thirst for exoticism. Slight changes occur from the photograph to the original: where Gauguin has given the figure long hair, determining the original subject’s sex and gender is impossible from the photograph alone. The overexposed wrapping of cloth in the photo now

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<sup>52</sup> While Andrews’s photo is housed in the Te Puna Mātaraunga o Aotearoa (National Library of New Zealand), the painting resides eleven thousand miles away in the National Gallery of Scotland.

<sup>53</sup> For more close comparisons of Gauguin’s work to photography of the Pacific, see Childs, *Vanishing Paradise: Art and Exoticism in Colonial Tahiti*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2014.)

<sup>54</sup> Published in Childs, *Vanishing Paradise* (2014), the original albumen photograph is titled *Rock Spring in the Sāmoan Islands*, and reproduced in Reginald G Gallop’s manuscript “Reminiscences of Tahiti and the Society Islands during a Six Week’s Visit, September-November 1887.” in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. MLMSS 448/4, page 52.

shows texture from canvas and brush and the desaturated foliage receives a wash of dark blue, green and a brown tonally close to the body's skin.<sup>55</sup> In a comparison between Gauguin's desire for escapism in a fictitious "primitive" past and the illusion of photographic time, Elizabeth C.

Childs notes:

This illusion of stopped time in ethnographic photography produces two subjective effects. On the one hand, photography freezes its subject in time, suggesting that its referent belongs to a static realm of history and not to the dynamic present... Yet on the other hand, another temporal fiction is at play here: the transport of the frozen ethnographic moment of the photograph to the viewer's own subjective present. The image's realism gives viewers the power to recall the frozen ethnographic sample to their own present will.<sup>56</sup>

By viewing and replicating images that froze indigenous peoples Gauguin could keep the Pacific peoples "uncorrupted by Western civilization", but in the photographers studio the subjects were ironically positioned to mimic the Western poses photographers knew.<sup>57</sup> Between the layers of freezing time, projecting primitivity, possession of authority, and recall to the present, Kihara's aggregation of images suggests her temporality cannot align with Danto's and her kinship with the past is erroneously defined through the projection of such tropes.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> From analyzing both Kihara's rendering and a reproduced publishing of Gauguin's painting, there does appear to be some color adjustments to Kihara's print, especially in brightening and saturating the painting so the cloth appears more yellow than white.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>57</sup> Artspace Aotearoa, "Yuki Kihara: Coconuts that Grew From Concrete".

<sup>58</sup> In the section "Two Branches of a Linear Tree" I further discuss the impact of delegating and imposing time upon cultural material and genres of art.



## Cross-Examining Gauguin

In comparison to “Coconuts that Grew from Concrete,” Kihara’s photo series *Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?* is one of several bodies of work in which she becomes the subject. Doing so means the possibility of (mis) representation in its reception, but rereading the title unveils that perhaps Kihara is asking and attempting to resolve these questions of time and representation within herself; the representational element is consciously addressed by defying the imaginative stereotypes discussed above. Kihara unwraps the European lens on Pacific Islander bodies, by utilizing the English title of one of Gauguin’s last paintings *D’ou Venons Nous? Que Sommes Nous? Où Allons Nous?* (Figure 8). Although Gauguin’s visits to Pacific Islands never included Sāmoa, Kihara relates Gauguin as a marker of reference to address the generationally persistent problems of Pacific identity including gender identification, exhibitionist exotification, and paradisiacal sublime. The larger goal for Kihara in this series is “to produce works that ‘take back’ what has been taken by people like Gauguin and other symbols of Western patriarchy in the Pacific” in this instance by addressing a forward facing position for Sāmoan heritage and reflecting upon a landscape of imposition and natural disaster.<sup>59</sup> This last remark refers not only to the consistent damage of cyclones, hurricanes, and tsunamis but to the idea of utilizing Sāmoa (through artistic or economic means) as a paradise despite the damages.

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<sup>59</sup>This chapter highlights several bodies of work I cannot detail here, in which Kihara connects her work to the problems inherent to and beyond Gauguin. Kihara, Yuki, “First Impressions” in *Gauguin: A Spiritual Journey*, edited by Christina Hellmich and Line Clausen Peterson, 168-173. San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; New York, NY: Prestel, 2018, 173.

Appropriating the title from Gauguin not only references an uncertainty of past and present, but with Kihara as creator and subject, reverses the conditions for *who* is framed within the questions. Thus, without visually appropriating a European mode of narrative production, Kihara implicates the double bind of othering Pacific Island bodies while subjecting them to imaginary ideals as Gauguin does. This problem begins long before Gauguin though: In her book *Possessing Polynesians: The Science of Settler Colonial Whiteness in Hawai'i and Oceania*, the Kanaka Maoli (*Hawaiian*) scholar Maile Renee Arvin explains that from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century British and French developed far-fetched theories connecting certain groups (read light skinned) of Pacific Islanders to a common Aryan ancestor and even went as far as to racialize the geography using Grecian semantic roots (*poloi* for Polynesia and *melas* for Melanesia).<sup>60</sup> Although the theory eventually fell out of favor, the cascade of perceptions, constructed views, and assimilation through Western settlement by Gauguin's lifetime, blended into a melting pot of questioning identity and proximity to "nativeness". Kihara's appropriation of his title captures the same questions in the context of imaging the remnants of colonialism.

In *Where do we come from?* Kihara dons a black gown reminiscent of Victorian mourning clothes: symbolically appropriate and reflective of the changes to dress under imperial control. Her persona, named Salome, appears throughout Kihara's work in reference to a real Sāmoan woman and an allegorical blend of culture (Figure 9). She explains: "For me the figure of Salome encapsulates the syncretism between Western technology and indigenous technology,

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<sup>60</sup> When traditionally italics would imply the use of foreign terms from the author, I hope to relate the scholar's preferred identity as their familiarity, thus reversing the foreign and familiar. Arvin, Maile Renee. *Possessing Polynesians: The Science of Settler Colonial Whiteness in Hawai'i and Oceania*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019. Project MUSE. 36-37.

and it's also a dynamic between the colonized and the colonizer."<sup>61</sup> Similar to the archival photographs in *Coconuts that Grew from Concrete*, Kihara desaturates her photos, providing literal and figurative contrast between her reflection of cultural space, time, and change and Gauguin's. Here, diversity is not a question of bodily identity but a jumble of supposedly definable and mutually exclusive concepts—Western, Indigenous, colonized, colonizer — that pulses over the bodies and land.

*Departure, Faleolo International Airport* reflects on both questions of “Where do we come from?” and “Where are we going?” (Figure 10). Although the airport shows no signs of destruction from the tsunami or cyclone, Kihara uses the title and her body to pause and reflect on those now departed from life. As a location of arrival, an airport offers a symbolic juncture for the inroads to culture and the infiltration of Western ideas. As a gateway, *Departure* reflects Kihara's own movement as an international artist and the migration of humans beyond the borders of culture. Composed with parallel black margins, the entryway resembles a panorama, which correlates to the format of Gauguin's original painting, sans tropical scenery and assorted figures. Visualizing the photo as a panorama provides a metaphor of traveling to another place by image as were the original purposes of the panoramic picture. Instead of the rolling landscapes, far off destinations, and historical events, a view of the Samoan airport resists telling a story of Samoa from the outside world.

In the setting of a barren schoolhouse, Kihara reflects on the emptiness that follows long after the damage of a cyclone in *Marist Brothers Old Pupil's Association House after Cyclone Evan, Mulivai* (Figure 11). In correlation to Gauguin's painting *Merahi metua no Tehaamana*

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<sup>61</sup> Macpherson, Amy. “Artists of Oceania: Yuki Kihara” Royal Academy of Arts. November 13, 2018. <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/oceania-video-yuki-kihara-siva-in-motion>.

(*Teha'amana has many ancestors*), Kihara's photograph provides a means to address the male gaze, context to her persona, and perceptions of scenery (Figure 12). The girl in the painting, Gauguin's paramore Tehama, wears a striped dress, clothing which the missionaries to the Pacific coerced upon the women as a repeal of nudity.<sup>62</sup> Tehama and Kihara are both enclosed by their backdrops, but Kihara turns away from the camera (consistent throughout the series) and looks towards the two figures on the wall. With the understanding that Tehama was still a young teenager when she met Gauguin, Kihara's place in the empty schoolhouse recalls how this young girl was taken miles away from her family, community, and friends to live as Gauguin's wife. While there are other photographs in the series which focus on the landscape as a site of deauthenticating the trope of paradise (*After Cyclone Evan, Lelata; Plantation, Lalomanu; and After Tsunami Galu Afi, Lalomanu*), these photographs incorporate both a response to Gauguin's archetypes of the female (or female-presenting bodies) and the lack of depicting the pressures of modernization in the Pacific Islands. As a Sāmoan fa'afafine, Kihara cognizantly navigates in this series and others, how her presentation as a female may render a particular, yet uneducated idea of Sāmoan gendering.<sup>63</sup> When presenting her body as a subject, she clothes herself to repeal a vision of primeval nudity, but she also dresses in a Victorian style gown to re-member the colonial imposition of dress code in the Pacific and the material connections of Pacific whale

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<sup>62</sup> Groom, Gloria and Genevieve Westerby, *Gauguin Paintings, Sculpture, and Graphic Works*.

<sup>63</sup> Fa'afafines, in Kihara's own words are "an Indigenous queer minority in Sāmoan culture known to be gifted in the spirit of more than one gender, or 'third gender'; the term is also used broadly to describe those who are, in the Western context, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexed, or queer." ("First Impressions", 170.) This definition notes an outward gaze to the West perhaps to further note that equating queer terminology is a linguistic conundrum. Kihara presented a closer look at this topic at the Metropolitan Museum, entitled "Shigeyuki Kihara: Living Photographs" in 2008-2009 to engage this topic.

bones for corsets.<sup>64</sup> Thus the distance of geographic and personal space of Europe and Gauguin is dramatically shortened while the continual effect of their presence is made visible.

In comparing and contrasting so-called differences in cultural display, Kihara confuses and refuses any solid idea of “authentic” in culture (between both modern/traditional and colonizer/colonized). In doing so she prepares the mind to see a veiled layer of hidden historical violence in seemingly ordinary places. In appropriating Gauguin, Kihara not only connects a central figure in canonical art history to the trials of her country, but engages a larger construction of whitewashing history and its afterlife in Samoan society. Kihara illuminates that hybridity and Western influence was inescapable for Sāmoans, and Pacific Islanders overall, yet covered up in the imagining of such places. Piercing through the art historical simulacra, she devalues the Western authority to authenticity which Danto ascribes to.<sup>65</sup> Such fictions bled into European art through Gauguin, Picasso, Matisse, Derain and other European artists of the early twentieth century; their break from European aesthetic archetypes only reinforced colonial exploits. In reference to Cuauhtémoc Medina’s point above, this double bind between exposing the subjection of Sāmoa and Sāmoans to Western consciousness (past and present) and working with Western art institutions to present these experiences underscores a conflict of receptive tolerance. This tolerance becomes the point where art institutions can say they meet the minimum of inclusion by representing an artist without critically examining how their own institution perpetuates the very ideas the artist acts against (especially when their collections contain the appropriation materials or artists in play, i.e. Gauguin). Just as Kihara’s work

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<sup>64</sup> Amy Macpherson, “Artists of Oceania: Yuki Kihara.”

<sup>65</sup> Danto accorded Gauguin with the accolade “first modernist” painter alongside Van Gogh. *After the End of Art*, 8.

operates to counter hegemonic stereotypes, the last artist in this thesis re-members a history from an indigenous point of view.

### **Jason Garcia: *Tewa Tales of Suspense***

*The famous dictum which states that all men are equal will find its illustration in the colonies only when the colonized subject states he is equal to the colonist.*

-Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 9.

The Kha'po Owingeh (Santa Clara Pueblo), about twenty-seven miles from the heart of Santa Fe, is home to Jason Garcia, also named Okuu Pin. He produces ceramics and printmaking to record, share, and educate others of the time-space for Tewa Pueblo culture. In his ceramic and serigraph series *Tewa Tales of Suspense*, Garcia offers a view of history not dictated by the conquerors; a view that references and uplifts historical figures of the Pueblo Revolts. Garcia doesn't pull from the textbook Anglo-American painting tradition like Kaphar or Kihara, but his appropriation sources reflect the twentieth century illustrative zeitgeist of American Pop Art and popular culture through graphic novels and comics. Unlike comics of this time period, Garcia's ceramic and serigraph cover pages combine a complex analysis of superhero agitprop with a divestment from the paradigm of victors (read heroes) as historians.

Every September, the Fiesta de Santa Fe offers a range of activities: parades, dances, Catholic mass, music, even a symbolic statue burning of "Zozobra", a 50 foot statue of bad luck. The original event, over three hundred years ago, commenced to annually remember the reconquest of New Mexico by the Spaniards in 1694.<sup>66</sup> In charge of the campaign, Don Diego de

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<sup>66</sup> However, reducing the interactions and engagements between Spanish and indigenous in the Americas to a spree of ransacking, and tyranny by a few exceptional exploratory men would erase the depth of documented opinions and

Vargas (1643–1704) set out to the northern Pueblos of what is now central and northern New Mexico. The central event of past Fiesta de Santa Fe’s featured a procession of the local basilica’s virgin Mother, named *La Conquistadora*, and until recently, a processional reenactment known as the Entrada. Multiple groups took up challenging the parade as denigrating and erroneous to the haunting historical details of Spanish colonialism since it portrays the Spanish as passive and peaceful.<sup>67</sup> While Garcia has not publicly commented on this festival and the Entrada, his series presents a narrative not centering de Vargas or the Catholic church.

Pueblo contact with the Spanish occurred as early as 1540 with Francisco Vázquez de Coronado’s investigative mission to what is now the American Southwest for gold, permeating terrain forgone by his earlier counterpart Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. The initial exploration of the area between 1540 and the founding of Santa Fe de Nuevo México Province in 1598 followed the Spanish formula of extraction, exploitation, and conversion to the Spanish Catholic church. Slowly, the Spanish would ensconce this land over the next one-hundred and twenty years, establishing a few settlements of soldiers and Franciscan monks. Unlike the southern colonial expansion in the Indies, Mexico, and South America, the Pueblo/Spanish enclave was consistently fruitless and therefore unruly when it came to resources and supplies. Continued support from the crown meant enslaving the locals, enforcing tribute, and religious conversion. Tensions mounted not only between the Spanish and the Pueblos but with other regional natives, and internally on both sides.<sup>68</sup> The Pueblo Revolts (which climaxed in 1680 and 1694) would

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outlooks for both sides. For an in-depth examination of perceptions of conquistadors and New World expansion see Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Cambridge, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>67</sup> Last, T.S., “Protestors plan to return for Entrada” Albuquerque Journal. September 1, 2017.

<https://www.abqjournal.com/1056778/protesters-plan-to-return-for-entrada.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Weber, David J. *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. EBSCO Academic eBook Collection. 65-68.

establish both indigenous remonstrations and Spanish narratives of conquest in the Southwest. Central to the resistance in 1680, a religious leader and warrior Po'pay (also Popé, c. 1630 – c. 1692), from the Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan) Pueblo, directed surprise attacks through a relay system between communities. The result was devastating, especially to the church missions in closest proximity. In 1688, Don Diego de Vargas entered New Mexico with an order from the Spanish crown to retake the Pueblo land. As a staggering boast, he proclaimed the feat was accomplished without bullets or bloodshed; he actually refers to his pardoning of the Pueblos, and not the later conflict in 1694 of resisting new Spanish settlers on Pueblo land.<sup>69</sup> After 1694, both sides were thoroughly depleted and would not engage in such devastating conflict over territory until the nineteenth century with the Mexican-American War. Today, through the festivities of Santa Fe and the broader collective mythos of Spanish conquest, the memorialization of history becomes a Spanish victory over the Pueblo Indians rather than a five-hundred year interchange of tension and violence.

Garcia's rendering of the Pueblo Revolts include classic components of the original Marvel series *Tales of Suspense* and of twentieth-century action comics overall. However, the science fiction monsters, aliens, and settings are replaced by historical Pueblo environments and characters where Garcia can explore changing control of the narrative. Science fiction played a crucial role throughout his life. Garcia vividly remembers in his adolescence, his maternal family members came together to form and fire pots; while they were practicing the forms of their ancestors, "I didn't necessarily understand the symbology, so I would usually create something I was more familiar with at that time, which was Star Wars or Spiderman or Darth Vader. So this

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<sup>69</sup> Barclay, Macquire, and Wild, eds. *Into the Wilderness Dream: Exploration Narratives of the American West, 1500-1805*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press. 1994. EBSCOhost Ebook, 187.



was the visual language I understood.”<sup>70</sup> In using comic books as the vehicle, Garcia employs a pop culture medium that enables a wide audience to understand the dynamics at play between history and narrative construction.

In *Tewa Tales of Suspense*, the visual language mimics the poses of comic book superheroes. For example, in *Tewa Tales of Suspense no. 4: Behold Po’Pay!* the main protagonist, Po’pay (or Popé) is a direct appropriation from Marvel’s introductory cover of the Vision (Figure 13, 14). Po’pay stands monumentally over his scrambling opponents. In lieu of a costume, Po’pay wears a breechcloth, and a tan mantle imitates the Vision’s cape. The knotted cord hanging from his right hand corresponds to the relay system used to determine attacks; resistance fighters would know when to attack by the number of knots in the cord. The fascinating twist in this depiction is the subversion of superhero dynamics steeped in colonialism. The characterization of heroes and villains quintessentially engages a binary between associations of familiar, or “good” and the reverse role of someone or something as exotic and encroaching (“bad”). In light of the Spanish and Pueblo’s tense relations, a narrative of violence is sure to rely on the partiality towards one group over another. In *Tewa Tales of Suspense # 1, August 1980*, this difference is depicted through the text panels (Figure 15). In a sawtooth bubble, the text “Branded as a ‘sorcerer, mad and evil,’ --Po’Pay drives the \$@!# Spanish out of his ancestral lands!” summarizes the animosity towards the Pueblo protagonist and a response. A Spanish soldier in the left margin exclaims “El Popé Bah! I’ll destroy you all!”, reflecting the genocidal atrocities accomplished in colonialism by disease or force. James J. Donahue compares this distinction to the classic traits of the popular, rich, secretive, and

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<sup>70</sup> New Mexico PBS, “NMPBS ¡COLORES!: Tewa Artist Jason Garcia” March 6, 2015, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0e8ZZnp9k0>

superhuman identities.<sup>71</sup> Po'pay's mission is to protect a small subset of the population rather than the cosmically vast spaces (large cities, worlds, even universes). He is literally labeled as evil, implying his status as protagonist is contested. He possesses no superpowers, and his identity through Garcia's lens is ethically good but not to the point of non-violence.

Garcia often layers religious iconography and characters into his smash-and-slash style renderings, which positions a moral dilemma at the forefront of the conflict. As the Spanish relied on the Catholic missions for authority and assimilation, they assumed a righteous hierarchy over the indigenous. *This World Renounced* shows a Franciscan monk prone against two Native American warriors (Figure 16). Black smoke envelops the ensemble as the monk begs for his life. One warrior raises a spear while the other straddles the monk, fist raised in anger. The previous images also included an outline of an adobe church in the background, and the perspective of a nearby soldier blazoning a wooden crucifix. This could reference the presence of the Franciscan order inside the pueblos or characterize the eventual aggravation with in-residence missionaries to ban cultural practices and assimilate the Pueblos with Spanish religious orders. The distinct renouncement of a certain world reinforces the need to revert from all of colonial Spanish ontology which historically depicted the aboriginal Americans as either eager converts and loyal patrons or uncivilized and in need of a savior.<sup>72</sup> Conversely, depictions of Catholic icons were venerated as the "real" champions for such conquest and in the case of Santiago Mataindios (Saint James, slayer of Indians), depicted as contemporary to historical Indigenous leaders (Figure 17). The narrative arc of superheroes fits aptly with both

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<sup>71</sup> Donahue, James J. "Super Indians and the Indigenous Comics Renaissance" in *Graphic Indigeneity: Comics in the Americas and Australasia*, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama, 254-272. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2020. Project MUSE, 254-257.

<sup>72</sup> Alcala, Luisa Elena. "The Image of the Devout Indian: The Codification of a Colonial Idea" in *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*, edited by Illona Katzew, 227-250. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, 230.

perspectives, showing victory as a moment of triumph against not only a foe, but an immense, abstract evil. However, the Pueblo representation also considers the time beyond that moment, aware of the written outcome, thus signifying a continual struggle with the literal and abstract consequences of the white “savior”.

Garcia illustrates the events of the Pueblo Revolt as comic book mythos but reimagines his protagonist as a postcolonial balance of narrative. Through this process, the question of deciding good and bad characters is relative and biased from where the author derives their heritage. Garcia does not avoid depicting violence, even through his own Pueblo characters, relating the ethical dilemmas of defence and attack. Such complexity actually makes the position of good and evil more ambivalent; rather, these real figures in history are not superheroes but carry the Herculean weight of acting in the face of a threat. Science fiction and postcolonial scholar Melissa Kurtz relates that the need for such imagery is beyond developing a emic representation in the comic genre, and “to realize the emergence of communities actively engaged in giving meaning to ‘postcolonialism’ and, thus, actively engaged in constructing the conditions for more ethical relations and material practice in our collective global future.”<sup>73</sup> Between the perpetuated narrative of Spanish victory, as glorified in the Santa Fe festival, and Garcia’s illustrative alternative, we see how contrasting narratives in a postcolonial perspective shake the foundations of historical progress so necessary to establishing a metanarrative.

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<sup>73</sup>Kurtz, Malisa. “Decolonizing Science Fiction, Performing Postcolonial Lines of Flight” in *Art as Revolt: Thinking Politics Through Immanent Aesthetics*, edited by David Fancy and Hans Skott-Myhre, 109-132. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. 2019, 130.

## Two Branches of the Same Linear Tree

Beyond having to visually reverse a “historical” narrative, another concern for Native American art, albeit Indigenous art worldwide, is a taxonomy of periodization, which polarizes and flattens their work. By periodization, I am not necessarily referring to the art historical grouping of schools of thought, i.e. Cubism or Fauvism, but a generalization between “traditional” and “contemporary”. The Cherokee Nation scholar America Meredith aptly condenses this binary mode with their multiple interpretations, whether that be through the lens of modernity, historical versus living artists, establishment over avant-garde, or simply as past versus present. When either traditional and contemporary are imposed on or self-proclaimed by indigenous people, it attempts to sort identity on the subjective primitive and civilized.<sup>74</sup>

Meredith continues with a vivid illustration of her point:

The easel arts, so-called *fine arts*, were all present in the Americas prior to contact: tempera painting on woven cotton canvases, marble sculpture, monumental architecture, and much more. Mass production is seen as inherently non-Native, but the Moche, Lambayeque, and other precontact Andean civilizations mass-produced tens of thousands of ceramics using molds.

Why are items made with honeysuckle or Job’s-tears deemed traditional when these plants were both imported from Asia in the late 19th century? Jennie Ross Cobb (Old Cherokee Nation, 1881–1959) developed her first photographs in 1887. James Young Deer (Nanticoke, 1876–1946) directed his first film in 1909, soon to be followed by Edwin Carewe (Chickasaw, 1883–1940). Why are Indigenous photography and filmmaking still struggling for acceptance in the

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<sup>74</sup>As someone who is not Native American, this may come across as a harsh critique to make of Native Americans who use these terms. Instead, I would ask the reader to note Meredith’s point is over linguistic reception. How do our minds process the identity of the artist or work when the terms traditional and contemporary appear in proximity to the artist? Do we engage with “traditional” as a perpetuating myth of being backwards in a future-forward society? Or does contemporary perpetuate a rejection of authenticity for the artist, because they move beyond a classical (and marketable) understanding of making for their culture? The goal in mind is to analyze the constructions produced from these terms more than picking apart an artist whether a material or process is traditional or not.

public perception of Native art? Instead of following any kind of timeframe, the arbitrary designations of traditional and contemporary rely on the lingering stereotype that Native Americans should use natural materials such as plants and should not harness technology and machines. We know this to be untrue. Let's not reinforce these misconceptions.<sup>75</sup>

Where this bifurcation becomes especially hazy is in the movement of art beyond the artist's hands. To use Garcia's work as an example again, he has the beneficial prestige of gallery representation, awards from international shows, and his work is on display in elite United States art museums. These museums have to show how each item fits into a collection plan, compartmentalizing for the sake of data handling, storage, and display. When relying on world art classifications for structuring curatorial departments, contemporary Native American artwork is easily triangulated either through their adherence to tradition or their supposed break from it.<sup>76</sup> In other words, when the configuration of text panels, display mechanisms, and gallery placement function to position things as traditional or contemporary they ultimately assume that these artists are either located through their relation to heritage or their position in a time outside heritage but not both. This has occurred on a mass scale before when many indigenous items were transferred from curio cabinets, "primitive" collections, and natural history museums into fine art museums. I recall here Danto's words that "I felt that my view meant a liberation from

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<sup>75</sup> Meredith, America. "Why Categorizing Native Art as 'Traditional' or 'Contemporary' is Toxic" *First American Art Magazine*. Feb 6, 2020. [https://firstamericanartmagazine.com/traditional\\_contemporary/](https://firstamericanartmagazine.com/traditional_contemporary/).

<sup>76</sup> Having spent several years as a volunteer and assistant in registrarial and curatorial museum departments, I can also play devil's advocate for the uninitiated to explain why museums get stuck in this cycle. More often than not, it comes down to the implicit curatorial and data hierarchy which keeps museums from falling into chaos. Registrarial departments admire staff who can be extremely organized, classify immense amounts of data, as well as coordinate with preparators and curatorial staff to present the objects as valuable through preservation. The value inherent to museums has exponentially pivoted to the exhibition where organization, clarity, and presentation also define success for the curator. In comparison, the first museums appear cluttered, ill-informed, and philistine; one could argue Dantian style, that this linear progress of museums also signifies its eventual exhaustion. When these respected traits are transferred to the identity— of the artist or object— in the collection, they are bound to the boxes in which the museum survives.

the tyrannies of history” and “If everything is possible, nothing is historically mandated: one thing is, so to say, as good as another. And that in my view is the objective condition for post-historical art.”<sup>77</sup> What Danto’s ideas lack is the ethical care and consideration to ask if visual liberation also creates a philosophy of cultural denial, where the agency of unlimited possibilities subverts reparations of compounded colonial violences against many people groups.

While the Art world struggles with these deep questions in ethics, the complexity of Native American histories speaks to a larger consequence of retaining the ideals of progress outlined by Hegel and necessary to construct Danto’s vision of ending. Of course, no artist has to subscribe to Danto’s theories, but when Native Americans expect to either “play Indian” or face questioning if their work lacks or recasts the cultural stereotypes, one might assume these kinds of jurisdictions of othering also subtly measure progress as subjective.<sup>78</sup> The reverse can happen as well: acceptance and popularity means the benefit of presenting Indigenous perspectives, yet Medina’s quote offers a warning that the revolutionary becomes collectible. It implies that development and tradition are opposing forces, which clash more than they coincide. Even when applied beyond Indigenous art, the distinction between traditional and contemporary as I have described, falls apart since any appropriation is taking something from the past and marking its relevance in the present. Art history pre-end-of-art in fact becomes just as complex as the contemporary stage when artists and scholars point out the relevance of the past through the gaps in view today.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Beard, Laura. “Playing Indian in the Works of Rebecca Belmore, Marilyn Dumont, and Ray Young Bear.” *American Indian Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (Fall 2014), 492.

## Epilogues: Relative Progresses

I restate Kihara's series title *Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?* to offer a fitting mindset for closing this body of work. It juxtaposes the continuity of philosophical musings with the pragmatic need to find closure. As much as everyone (as an artist) is seemingly free now from the historical pressure of progress, our productions of narrative will reflect a difference between what we are attempting to make and what we are attempting to undo. Appropriation is one useful method of assessing these temporal evaluations through a visual language. Tying images, ideas, persons, and theories across time bafflingly evades a linear structure of time and instead de-centers narrative or progress as the criterion for making history.

What is un-done in Danto's theory and, by proxy, art history through each of these artists' work? For the three artists above, appropriation of older, colonial works reveals the pluralistic nature of narrative: the possibility of histories within History. Despite the re-presentation of the colonial past, appropriating art complicates the reception and critique around such works: they are equally appeals and agents for futurity. It simultaneously rejects the original purpose of those works to define a new Hegelian spirit of justice for the marginalized. Moreover, as artists occupy the spaces of curator, historian, and philosopher, the authority shift marks their radical promise to declare an end to art when it actually arrives, not when one man declares it to be.

Where do these artistic observations affect the understanding of Danto's theories then? Do they affirm an end of art by utilizing the agency of pluralism? Even more so they perform a

legitimacy to an end of Western hegemony that Danto alludes to. I still question whether the end of art is a reasonable theory for Danto's own discipline, but it seems to herald an age where agency is possible if we strive for it. The inclusion and diversity of artists like Titus Kaphar, Yuki Kihara, and Jason Garcia to a globalized Art World are only the doorway to examining the neocolonial elements of today's Art world. If these artists' views negate Danto's relation to time, it is because perspectives of time only point into a temporal prism. Danto's end of art is therefore a one-point perspective rather than a 3D maneuvering of time. The pluriversal advent from the end of art theory becomes a means to engage temporal disruptions of a past defined by Western ideals. Thus the correlation is perceived identities of time and their cross-disciplinary and cultural differences. Furthermore, Danto's position as a philosopher and art critic mimics a larger problem of artistic recipients (curators, critics, museums and the like): we may find philosophers still want to operate at the helm and position art (and its makers) in the wake.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps where Danto fails to diversify his own litmus tests for ending art and conceiving a post-historical era becomes a theoretical starting point for the marginalized identifying artist to critique the afterlives of colonial narratives? In that way they can bridge the rift in hypothesizing a pluralized world and manifesting it without perpetuating the binary paradigms of traditional art history.

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<sup>79</sup> Lütticken, Sven. "Posthuman Prehistory" in *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989*, edited by Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh, 224-241. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017. 226-234.



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## Illustrations



Figure 1. *Enough About You*, 2016. Oil on canvas with antique frame. 45 x 5.5 x 70 inches (114.3 x 12.7 x 177.8 cm). Private Collection. © Titus Kaphar. Photo: Christopher Gardener.



Figure 2. Attributed to John Verelst, *Elihu Yale with Members of his Family and an Enslaved Child*, ca. 1719. Oil on canvas, 79 1/4 x 92 3/4 inches (201.3 x 235.6 cm). Yale Center for British Art, B1970.1. Public Domain.





Figure 3. James Worsdale, *Elihu Yale with his Servant*, 18th century. Oil on canvas, 91 × 56 1/8 in. (231.1 × 142.6 cm). Yale University Art Gallery. 1910.1. Public Domain.



Figure 4. Titus Kaphar, *Unfit Frame*, 2016. Oil on canvas with antique frame, broom and books. 45 x 39 x 12 in. (114.3 x 99.06 x 30.48 cm). Birmingham Museum of Art, AFI.154.2016a-k © Titus Kaphar. Photo: Christopher Gardener.





Figure 5. Titus Kaphar, *Watching Tides Rise*, 2012. Oil on canvas, tar. 78 x 6 1/2 x 109 in. (198.12 x 16.51 x 276.86 cm). Toledo Museum of Art, 2018.25 © Titus Kaphar. Photo: Christopher Gardener.

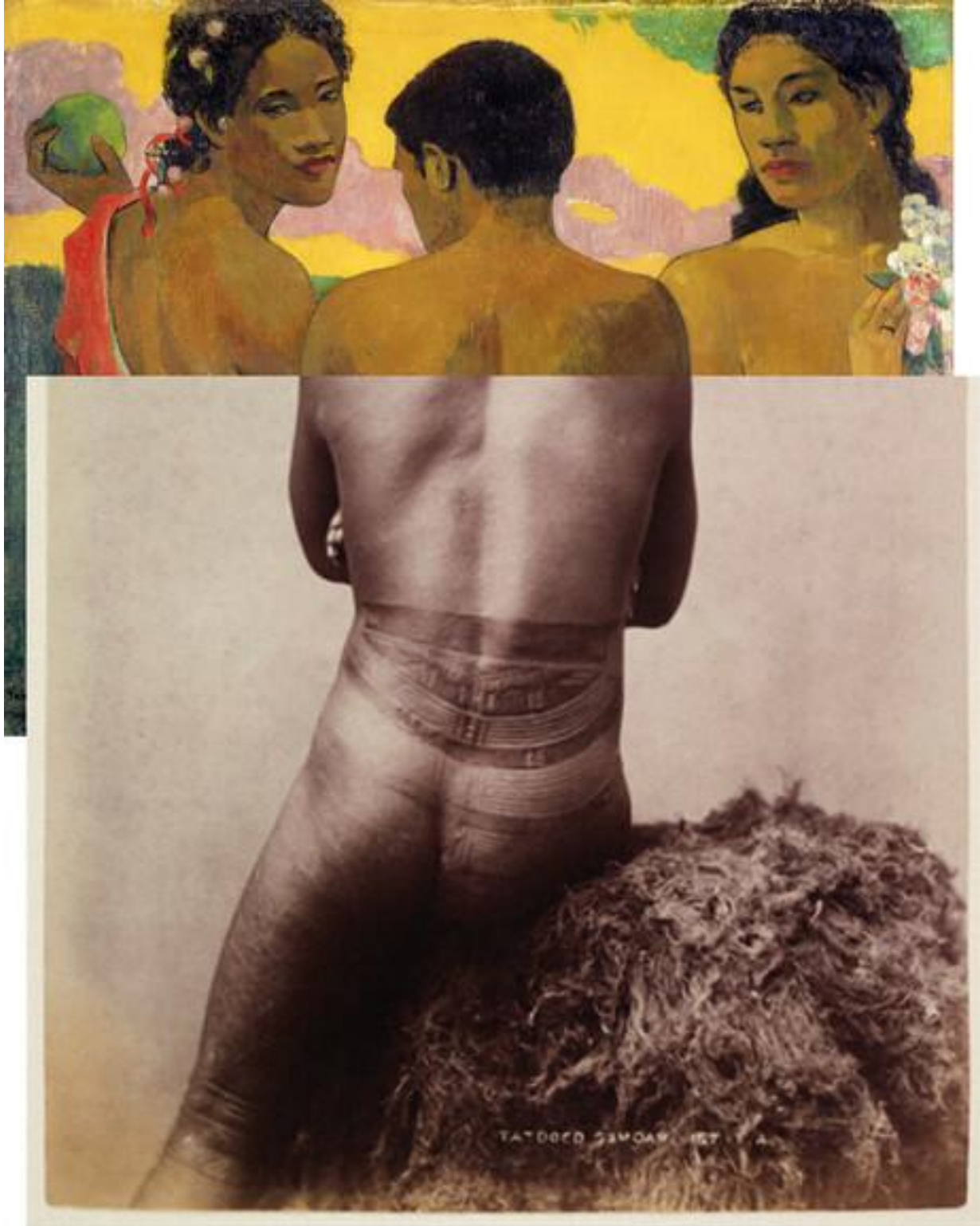


Figure 6. Yuki Kihara, *Three Tahiti (Sāmo) ans (after Gauguin)*, 2017. Pigment print on paper. 20 7/25 x 15 47/50 x 1 4/5 in. (51.5 x 40.5 x 4.5 cm). Photo courtesy of Milford Galleries.





Figure 7. Yuki Kihara, *Samoaan Waters (after Gauguin)*, 2021. Pigment print on canvas. 18 57/64 x 11 13/16 x 1 11/16 in. (48 x 30 x 4.3 cm). Photo courtesy of Milford Galleries.



Figure 8. Paul Gauguin , *D'ou Venons Nous/ Que Sommes Nous/ Où Allons Nous?* (*Who Are We/ Where Are We Going?*) 1897–98. Oil on canvas. 54 3/4 x 147 1/2 in. (139.1 x 374.6 cm) Museum of Fine Art Boston. 36.270.





Figure 9. Thomas Andrew (1855-1939), *Samoan Half Caste*. From the album: *Views in the Pacific Islands*. Albumen silver print, 1886. 3 3/4 x 5 1/2 in. (9.5 x 14 cm). Museum of New Zealand, O.037952. Public Domain.



Figure 10. Yuki Kihara, *Departure, Faleolo International Airport*, 2013. C-print, 23 27/64 x 33 5/64 in. (59.5 x 84 cm). Photo courtesy of Milford Galleries.



Figure 11. Yuki Kihara. *Marist Brothers Old Pupil's Association House After Cyclone Evan, Mulivai*, 2013. C-Print, 23 27/64 x 33 5/64 in. (59.5 x 84 cm). Photo courtesy of Milford Galleries.



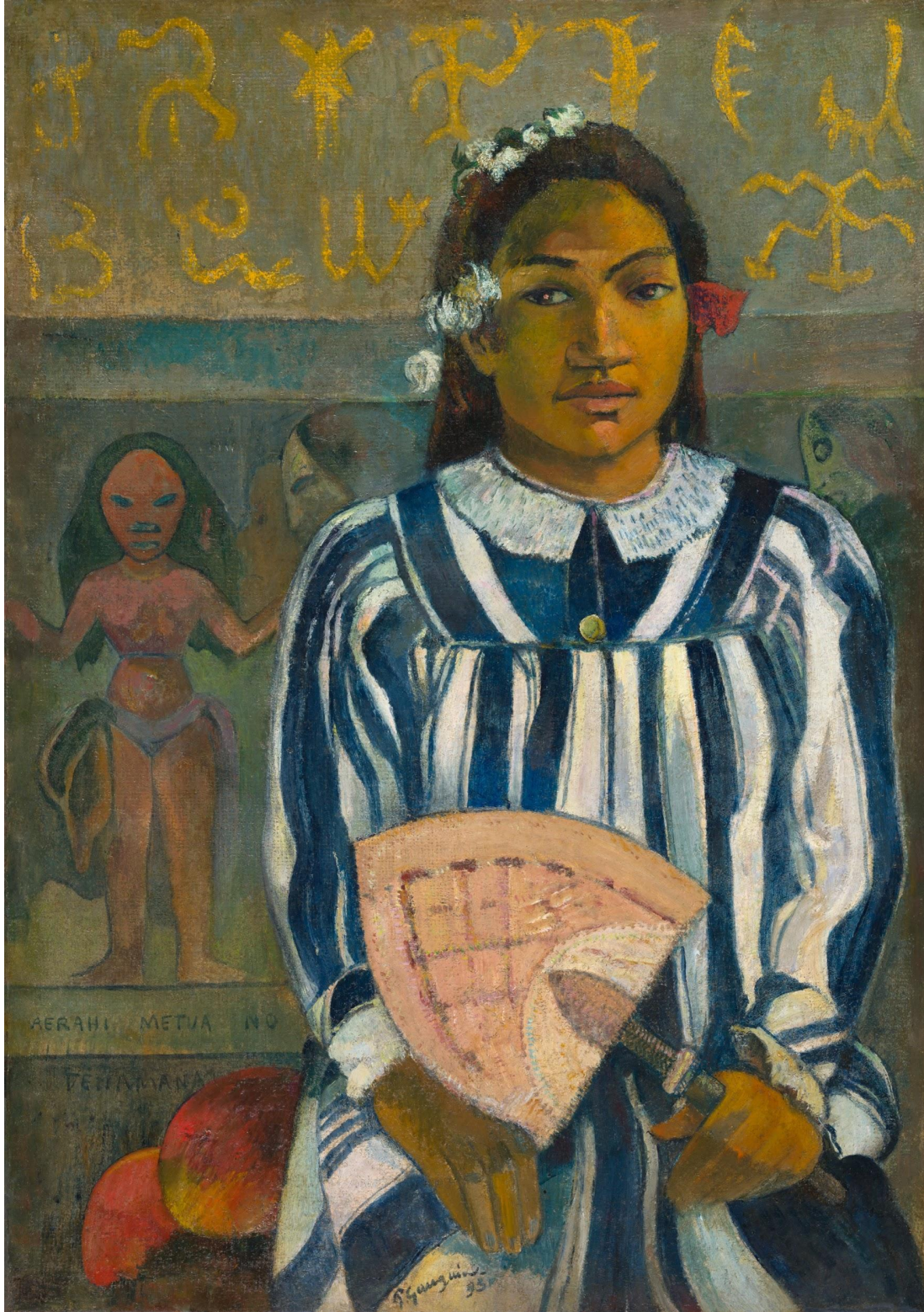


Figure 12. Paul Gauguin, *Merahi metua no Tehamana* (*Tehamana Has Many Parents or The Ancestors of Tehamana*), 1893. Oil on jute canvas, 29 1/2 × 20 7/8 in. (75 × 53 cm). Art Institute of Chicago, 1980.613. Public Domain.





Figure 13. Jason Garcia (1973-), *Tewa Tales of Suspense*, *Tewa Tales of Suspense no. 4: Behold Po'Pay!* Serigraph. 24 x 19 in. (60.96 x 48.26 cm). The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art. 2019.36.





Figure 14. Stan Lee, et al., "Behold...The Vision!" *The Avengers*, Vol. 1 No. 57. Published October 1, 1968. Accessed October 12, 2021. <https://comicvine.gamespot.com/the-avengers-57-beholdthe-vision/4000-113991/>





Figure 15. Jason Garcia (1973-), *Tewa Tales of Suspense*, *Tewa Tales of Suspense! # 1 August 1973*. Hand processed clay and mineral pigments.

[https://www.santafenewmexican.com/pasatiempo/art/four-native-artists-spread-the-word-about-the-pueblo-revolt/article\\_4bb2f26f-8acc-5af6-b166-24f84d8f4769.html](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/pasatiempo/art/four-native-artists-spread-the-word-about-the-pueblo-revolt/article_4bb2f26f-8acc-5af6-b166-24f84d8f4769.html)





Figure 16. Jason Garcia (1973-), Tewa Tales of Suspense, *This World Renounced!* Earthenware. 12 1/4 x 8 1/2 x 1/4 in. (31.115 x 21.59 x .635 cm). The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art. 2019.56.





Figure 17. "St. James the Great, Apostle of Christ, intervenes in the war in Cuzco." Page 406v from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government or El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615. The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen.