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## The Space of Native Art

*Greasy Grass, Montana, June 25, 2013*

It was a day of speeches and ceremony. Talk of fighting, pain, and land once again filled this space. Dr. Leo Killsback, a Northern Cheyenne, and part of the design team for the Indian Memorial at the Battlefield of Little Bighorn site, told the gathered audience that the Native resistance “was about protecting our way of life and, most importantly, our homeland” (Olp 2014). William C. Hair, a Northern Arapaho representative, argued that “this is the closest we’ll ever come to acknowledgement from the government of the atrocities we have suffered” (Bertolini and Ore 2012, 11). As they spoke, three bronze warriors rode off to battle.

The *Spirit Warriors* sculpture stands directly across from the memorial to fallen US Army soldiers, near Crow Agency, Montana, headquarters of the Apsaaloké (Crow) Nation. It stands as both part and counterpart to the Battlefield at the Little Bighorn National Monument. The Battlefield Memorial was once a singularly focused tribute to Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer and his ill-fated 7th Cavalry. The Indian Memorial, added to this federal historic site in 2003, reframed the commemoration. The thirty-five-by-twelve-foot bronze *Spirit Warriors* runs along the northern edge of the Indian Memorial, which is composed of a semi-enclosed circular mound. Inside the mound one finds names and images etched into dark granite walls merging earth and stone. Except for the bronze sculpture, the Indian Memorial perhaps most closely resembles the aesthetics of the national Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The Indian Memorial, however, stands as the nation’s only federal recognition of tribal warriors.

Oglala artist Colleen Cutshall designed *Spirit Warriors* as a striking metal armature that outlines seven figures (see fig. 5.1). In this work, her first in metal,

she skillfully renders a flattened yet still three-dimensional version of ledger art techniques. Local journalist Heidi Gease marvels at the open “line drawing” feel, as Cutshall defies her metal medium; Gease calls the piece “the antithesis of bronze,” which is generally heavy and solid (2003). The openness of her creation seems appropriate, given its placement among the winds and swaying grass of the plains. Together with the larger Indian Memorial, the sculpture is in a parallel way charged with opening relations: facilitating dialogue about nations and narratives, and about how we define and makes claims on history.

I am drawn to *Spirit Warriors* because I see it as operating via space as much as history. Memorials are often created to articulate a special place, to reflect the idea that a certain location is notable and meaningful. Sometimes the site is important, as in this case. Other times the site is made (more) important by the introduction of the memorial, such as the national Vietnam Memorial. By these placements of articulation, meaning is both created and reflected, and, sometimes, contested. This is true even as the meaning(s) are constantly shifting. The battlefield site itself offers a perfect example, given the fluidity of its name and its competing interpretations. Cutshall certainly captures the notion of fluidity by presenting a moment of beginning (a battle) within the larger tension between contested spatialities. Breath-takingly framed by prairie horizon and the wide sky, the “spirit warriors” rush to secure an indigenous world. The battle being referenced, like many during this era, centered on tribal refusals to return to the reservation. Cutshall’s work remembers how American designs on the land conflicted with and were incompatible with indigenous spatialities—something the original memorial explicitly excluded in favor of cleanly nationalistic and racialized memory-making.

The American efforts to confine Native peoples to reservations and destroy bison herds were clear anti-Native geographic projects aimed at remaking the land both materially and discursively (as chapter 3 describes). The attack on Native cultures was also a form of spatial violence explicitly outlining when and where such ways of life could be practiced—generally, in the past, and not within the presumed territory of the United States. Cutshall intentionally captures some of the struggle over conflicting cultures and spatialities by drawing subtle attention to the intimate impacts of the anti-Indian campaigns. She notes that “for any war memorial, you need to have some sense of the humanity that’s involved . . . and I don’t think you do that with just three warriors riding through the sky” (quoted in Gease 2003). The original call for artist submissions requested just three warrior

figures. Cutshall adapted her proposal, adding a woman figure to allude to the families, relationships, and ways of life supporting and motivating the warriors. She still presents viewers three male warriors, mid-departure with their three horses, running off toward what will be a historic, if "last," military victory.

Cutshall presents a lone woman tailing the war party. This figure provides visible support to the resistance effort, handing a war shield to and exchanging possible final glances with the trailing warrior. The depiction of this exchange suggests that the warrior's returning look is not just the practical act of securing the shield, but of affirming the connection to his family and people, a moment of summoning courage by remembering why he is heading off to fight. The mounted/mounting warriors (representing the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Lakota) head east to confront and ultimately defeat Custer's column and his Native Scouts (Apsaalooké and Arikara). Cutshall reminds us that Native women, although not necessarily part of the fighting, "were present at the battle, providing food, fresh horses, new weapons and encouragement. They assisted men injured in battle and later helped mutilate corpses, which was a ritual believed to kill and block the human spirit in its journey to the afterlife" (Gease 2003). Cheyenne participant and witness Kate Bighead conveyed the story that women

pushed the point of a sewing awl into each of [Custer's] ears, into his head. This was done to improve his hearing, as it seemed he had not heard what our chiefs in the South had said when he smoked the pipe with them. They told him then that if ever afterward he should break that peace promise and should fight the Cheyennes, the Everywhere Spirit surely would cause him to be killed. (Bighead 2004, 376-377)

Bighead's account informs Cutshall's creation and indicates participation in a larger spiritual realm that is part of the difference between the Native and settler spatialities at stake in this conflict. As the description suggests, the mutilation of Custer's body was seen as an ongoing contestation with him. After his death, he was still subject to the forces that regulated life and death on the plains, and their warning to improve his hearing held ongoing consequences subject to the retribution of the Everywhere Spirit who enforced the laws the Cheyenne had long ago learned to follow. The power of traditional "treaties" between human and other-than-human partners held utmost power. Those agreements and responsibilities were rooted in the land itself, beyond the purview of humans alone, and the resistant Plains warriors and societies expected and hoped to protect a future that sustained these Native spatialities.

Rather than focusing narrowly on the acts of warfare and the glory (and horror) of battle and victory, however, the Native woman figure reinserts the entirety of the tribal world. More than any other element of the piece, local journalist Heidi Gease suggests, the woman in *Spirit Warriors* "represents the tribes affected by this and other battles" (2003). By recovering this tribal entirety, the "humanity involved" centers around Native peoples and cultures oriented toward particular kinds of experiences with and relationships to their lands.

Cutshall's contribution, however, also helps anchor a connecting point between past and present, between indigenous and settler societies. The larger Indian Memorial features a "spirit gate," arranged to open sightline and pathway, intentionally created by the design team to allow transit for the dead. Moreover, *Spirit Warriors* aligns with the gate to provide the spirits of both the Native warriors and American soldiers a direct opportunity for connection, perhaps even reconciliation. The act of generating this kind of memorializing presents an opportunity much like we see in Paige Raibmon's description of the Robert Gray-descended family's remarkable ceremonial apology to the Opitsaht village of Vancouver Island (mentioned in chapter 3). Yet it might more closely parallel the recurring and as yet not fully realized moment for reconsideration found in Satanta, Kansas. As the memorial sustains a portal between earthly and spirit worlds, the paired Indian and cavalry memorials make intersections between coexisting geographies visible and material. The physical intersection reveals spaces held in tension, a "stalemate" that often proves uncomfortable for those accustomed to Eurocentric and tailored narrations.

The memorial marks out a place where current tribal peoples can concretely engage with both the past and the present of that place, with the importance of this battle and of following one's responsibilities to homelands. Now, "there's something there," Northern Cheyenne tribal member Tim Lame Woman points out (Bohrer 2003). He once helped install an "unauthorized" memorial with other American Indian Movement members in 1988. These unofficial memorializing acts reflected long-standing desires to rescript but also reflect how that event and that landscape is understood by many Native peoples. At the monument's dedication, Lame Woman noted "we finally have something, a place for our children to go and see, and it's long overdue" (Bohrer 2003). Public history researchers Jim Bertolini and Janet Ore note, in their application to register the Indian Memorial addition as a national historic site, that

the idea for the Indian Memorial at Little Bighorn Battlefield first arose in the 1920s. Mrs. Thomas Beaverheart wrote to then Superintendent [of the battlefield cemetery, Eugene] Wessinger requesting a monument to her fallen father, Lame White Man. The War Department ignored Mrs. Beaverheart's request, a policy to which the National Park Service conformed until the mid-1980s when popular support forced a change in administrative position. In the 1960s, when the National Congress for American Indians (NCAI) and the more radical American Indian Movement (AIM) demanded additional autonomy and enfranchisement for American Indians through demonstrations and lobbying, they raised the issue of a memorial to American Indians at Little Bighorn Battlefield. (Bertolini and Ore 2012, 7)

The tensions worked out in sites like the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument rearrange and reconstruct the meaning of this event and its site. The space itself shifts dialectically to reflect and reshape the identities of those giving it meaning.

The Native victory over Custer in 1876 was an unexpected loss at a time when the frontier was rapidly closing and only a handful of Native peoples were still defiantly surviving in the northern plains and southwestern deserts. This battle's loss marred the nation's otherwise ebullient centennial. National discourse and military redoubling reflected the embarrassment and symbolism of such a defeat. The loss rendered a centuries-old colonial project incomplete. It rendered the nation's geographic project and its inevitability suspect. It momentarily challenged the "self-apparent" superiority of Western culture and European Americans and thus led to renewed pursuit of this presumed natural hierarchy. The deferred colonial project and those paused notions of historical trajectory were disruptions of White racialized and national space, and uncomfortable affirmations of Native space. While military defeats can be reconciled as part of the cost of war, this concrete proof that supposedly primitive tribal space could persist and repel the certainty of a predestined American geography was unacceptable.

We can easily trace the instructive overlap and changing of names at this site as a way of observing its spatial constructions. As a focal narrative point for the US nation-state's privileged historical centrality, it was quickly tabbed as Last Stand Hill and physically marked by a large white monument covering the relocated graves of army soldiers. In 1946 it was named the Custer Battlefield National Monument. The name was changed again in 1991 to the Little Bighorn Battlefield

National Monument, in recognition of an indigenous perspective that viewed the battle through a decidedly different lens. The Lakota, of course, have long referred to the battle as happening at Greasy Grass—marking the event using a preexisting Native cartography. By 1999, grave markers were installed for two of the fallen Native warriors, Lame White Man and Noisy Walking. A few years later, ten were marked. When the 2003 Indian Memorial was completed, 127 years after the battle, the list of all seventy-five or so fallen Native warriors (and long ignored oral histories and pictographs of the battle) were installed.

Whether Custer or his final battle were actually strategically important matters less than the fact that it has taken on such cultural significance and sustains its place in historical narratives and popular lore (Flores 2009). Americans scripted the battle at Little Bighorn as a thoroughly nationalistic event that no one survived, generating defeat sympathy and conveniently ignoring the thousands of Native people who came away alive and victorious and telling stories. For a time, historians ludicrously even positioned "Comanche," a solitary army horse escapee who returned to Fort Riley in Kansas, as representative of the American experience. The horse was treated with historic reverence, eventually being "stuffed and put on display at the University of Kansas" upon his death (Brooke 1997). In short, the man (Custer) and also the battle itself have both been treated in a variety of ways, from reverence to ridicule. Obviously, Custer remains a shared figure for non-Native and Native alike. Naming the site after Custer, however, illustrated a specific kind of meaning-making. Stepping back, we can better see how the treatment of Custer, the horse Comanche, and the battlefield reveals a struggle between American and indigenous spatialities.

More than just a temporal point of transformation, this event and the Little Bighorn Battlefield serve as case studies on the tension of overlapping spatialities. The possession of that space and its meaning are interrelated. It indicates a sense of ownership and announces the spatiality being privileged. Since the victory at Greasy Grass, this space has been filled with conflicting and emotionally laden sets of meanings. For the first several decades after the battle, the dominant narratives commemorated this space as a massacre site. Most understand that the battle at Little Bighorn, and all Native-US wars, were at least partially concerned with land and resources, although this typically gets subsumed to the narratives of cultural clashes and the inevitable Native submission to "civilization." These narratives and the encounters being narrated are, of course, only materially meaningful as spatial acts. Nevertheless, the discursive and historical trajectories

tend to emphasize the abstractions of an ontology of global social evolution with a universalized teleology (in short, Manifest Destiny as being neutral, and good for everyone).

For Native people concerned with this site, the physical space and their spatialities needed reconciliation. The lack of resolution among spiritual, cultural, and material resulted in "illness." As Cutshall asserts, "Native people have needed a place there to connect to, and you just couldn't with that Cavalry orientation. You just got sick" (Gease 2003). The dual or newly synthesized memorial(s), by occupying the same land, now more easily forces the question of geography and spatiality. The different meanings and relationships to this space are laid bare and given the simultaneous presence already in place "there." Rather than simply trying to answer questions about meaning with authority and finality, the site is now explicitly involved in fluid and contested inquiries of meaning-making and spatiality. What is this place? What happened here? Why is it important? Whose space is this? Who belongs here? Who are we in relation to the space? Who decides how it is defined? What are the implications of our various answers?

Even with the contestations and changes, Little Bighorn has just one access point for the United States: a historically contained temporal and cultural reference. Without this battle, this site is not part of American discourse and history. It remains, in effect, Greasy Grass Creek for a good while longer. The presence and death of Custer in this place, however, marked that moment and that space in a new way. Now it has been marked again, led by attention to an indigenous geography that highlights the tension of histories and spatial practices.

### *Why Installations?*

Following the model suggested by Colleen Cutshall's amazing work, I want to use the rest of this chapter to present the work of two additional Native artists using public installation art to disrupt settler spatialities and to mark and reestablish indigenous geographies. Cutshall, Edgar Heap of Birds, and Bob Haozous each offer confrontational creations that physically illuminate how a space is being produced and draw attention to the co-constitutive relationship between space and identity. Using public installations, these artists contest and reshape dominant spatialities, both implicitly and explicitly recovering tensions embedded within indigenous and settler colonial constructions of space. Much like the artists working with maps (discussed in chapter 4), their work draws

attention to how spaces exist as overlapping and contested realities and suggests the need for greater consideration of how geography is a vital category of analysis toward making sense of such tension.

In terms of the practical methods the artists use to force this "conversation," we should note the most salient distinctions between the artists in this chapter and those in the previous chapter. First, we see a transition from the use of maps to the use of public installation. This move is a shift in genre and media, but also a shift in the explicit and hands-on engagement with spatiality, for both the artists and viewers. A map is a representation of spatiality in two dimensions. Its encounter requires a conceptual bridge from representation to the material world. A public installation piece is a three-dimensional map that, because of its dimensional and locational advantages, can work as a representation of spatiality while physically occupying a site-specific space. In brief, maps tend to work from a larger conceptual scale toward the smaller, while installations start from smaller scale and work toward applicability on the larger scale (beyond the immediate site). Installation pieces, then, serve as spatial markers themselves, and thereby tend to resemble the street signs discussed in chapters 1 and 2 as well as the map creations discussed in chapter 4.

I start with Edgar Heap of Birds, whose work creates conversation between the kinds of work being done by the Native and non-Native street signs outlined in those earlier chapters. According to art scholars Nicolas De Oliveira, Nicola Oxley, Michael Petry, and Michael Archer, installation art "rejects concentration on one object in favour of a consideration of the relationships between things and their contexts" (De Oliveira et al. 1994, 8). One of the core ways that installation art concentrates on relationships and contexts is to deemphasize art hanging on the museum wall. Installation artists typically seek to shape an experience so that the viewers become consciously implicated in the artistic process. Often they locate such work outside of the standard settings—galleries, museums, studios—in order to draw attention to the relationship between viewers and the world they interact with, and remind them of how placement and engagement shapes the encounter. Installations strategically become part of our spaces in order to help us recognize the contours of that space and ways of embodying our spatialities, and then to challenge them and their assumed authenticity.

These opening points of discussion lead us nicely toward the work of Hachivi (sometimes written as Hock E Eye V) Edgar Heap of Birds, a Cheyenne/Arapaho artist who is currently a professor of art and Native studies at Oklahoma

University. Heap of Birds has become notable for producing public installations consciously sited to simultaneously raise localized and more national- (sometimes global-) scale questions about colonialism, dispossession, discourse, indigeneity, racism, and visibility. His works typically aim to stimulate discussions about collective identities and narratives. I am particularly interested in his work with public signs, which range from street and parking signs to billboards. His intentional appropriation of public and street signs—those most dominant tools for everyday spatial ordering—interrogates what some call the “taken-for-granted infrastructure of daily life” (Rose-Redwood 2009, 461). In brief, he hijacks everyday tools that “invisibly” shape our world, works to make them newly visible, and then turns them upon themselves.

### *Installing Recognition*

In contrast to the creation of the Indian memorial at the battlefield at Little Bighorn, Heap of Birds focuses his work on the collective forgetting that happens via everyday practices and in everyday places. Memorials operate as physical interventions in space to combat memory “loss,” and to continually embed specific meaning where it constantly seeks to be changed and lost. Memorials try to stabilize space, to normalize and materialize certain spatialities. In contrast, Heaps of Birds facilitates a destabilization of dominant cultural geographies via everyday spatial markers such as street signs. He works to show how the same cultural and spatial processes that produce memorials are in operation in these mundane technologies as well. In noticing these mechanisms, he admits to being “fascinated by how gullible we are, to believe the propaganda” and that “whatever you have in print, people believe it very readily” (Heap of Birds 1999).

Taking advantage of this official reliance on text-as-truth (“when you’re being subversive, that’s the best arena to use”), he works to harness the very same power to craft spatial meaning via unexpected reinventions. In these ways, Heap of Birds’ public installations overlap with Cutshall’s officially sanctioned memorial, but perhaps more closely align with those unofficial efforts by American Indian Movement members who temporarily marked Native warriors’ grave sites and intentionally sought to disrupt the unchecked memorialization of Custer. Whereas the American Indian Movement memorials were removed because they were deemed unauthorized, Heap of Birds’ works are solicited and commissioned. Perhaps because they are understood as art, and temporary spatial insertions, they find a welcome place in the interruption of landscapes.

W. Jackson Rushing III notes that many of Heap of Birds’ early public installation and concept art pieces actively engage in a kind of symbolic “reclamation of social space” (Rushing 1999, 375). Janet Berlo and Ruth Phillips suggest that Heap of Birds holds a deep appreciation for the long and important history of Native artists using modern art forms to convey “insurgent messages.” They quote, for instance, Heap of Birds’ insistence that imprisoned Cheyenne ledger book artists used their drawing as a way of “defending native peoples,” rather than just documenting their incarceration experiences or reminiscing over previous times (Berlo and Phillips 1998, 214). As Heap of Birds has stated, Native artists often “find it effective to challenge the white man through use of the mass media [and that] the insurgent messages within these forms must serve as our present-day combative tactics” (Heap of Birds 1987, 171). By redesigning ordinary streets signs and posting public “orders,” Heap of Birds boldly calls out the role that uneven social relations continue to play in the suppression of Native cultures, peoples, and geographies. He reminds or points out to viewers where they are located, both physically and culturally, in relation to indigeneity and settler colonialism. His art renames public spaces, marks their ongoing production as settler spatialities, and forces an acknowledgment of persistent Native geographies.

Heap of Birds’ signs mimic authoritative street signs in presenting simple, direct statements with no artistic elaboration that might distract from or contextualize the message, or conceal the co-productive relationship between sign and viewer. He places his viewers in a position to contend with the inconsistency of an authoritative sign displaying an anticolonial message, for example, a Toronto billboard emblazoned with “Imperial/Canada/Share/Stolen/Lands” (Heap of Birds 2009, 32). In the context of reminding people of Native geography, Heap of Birds seeks to “[re-label] the landscape to exile the white viewer” (Ohnesorge 2008, 59). In online statements for the Walker Art Museum in Minneapolis, Heap of Birds explains that his public creations are specifically intended to generate discussion and disrupt simplistic, and especially colonial, narratives. He acknowledges that “public discourse is part of the work” and actively works to generate an awareness of the relationships among artist, art, audience, and context (Heap of Birds 2007).

Heap of Birds understands that producing truly engaging public art requires fostering intersections. The challenge of creating such opportunities drives his artistic process and shapes his final creations: “I expect it, I deliver it, and we deal with it. It’s not just the work, it’s what happens between the art and the

public—that's public art" (Heap of Birds 2007). Such engagement requires a careful balance of presentation and intrigue. "If you're too explicit," he argues, "people just turn the page and go to have lunch. They don't really dig to find anything. I think you have to hit that edge, where it, just visually, makes you wonder 'what's that? Should I look at that?' and then investigate what that means" (Heap of Birds 1999).

I want to first take a look at one of his more standard non-installation pieces, *American Leagues* (1996). This painting nicely illustrates Heap of Birds' willingness to address controversial topics, and to do so in a relatively straightforward manner. As a critique of Indian mascots, Heap of Birds re-presents an intentionally grotesque version of the Cleveland Indians baseball icon. Long the target of activists concerned with representational force and the implications of Native peoples serving as mascots, the image is placed on a white background embellished by wild marks resembling smudges from bloody hands. The four edges offer minimal text (clockwise, starting from the top): Cleveland Indians/Human Beings/Not Mascots/Value. The phrase "Smile for Racism" boldly announces the artist's position on the use of mascots. In all, he echoes the long ago articulated observation by Vine Deloria, who noted that Native peoples' biggest problem in relating to Whites was White inability to see Native people as human beings (Deloria 1969, 2). They could only see, he notes, "mythical Indians." Heap of Birds painting makes a similarly forward assertion and reveals his contentment with moralistic and didactic approaches to audience engagement when deemed necessary. The weight of Deloria's observation means that Heap of Birds, and all Native artists, must confront the mythologization of Native people and thus constantly confront a serious need to inject Native realities where they are invisibilized and ventriloquized. As Heap of Birds argues,

even as these grave hardships exist for the living Indian people, a mockery is made of us by reducing our tribal names and images to the level of insulting sports team mascots, brand name automobiles, camping equipment, city and state names, and various other commercial products produced by the dominant culture. This strange and insensitive custom is particularly insulting when one considers the great lack of attention that is given to real Indian concerns. . . . To be overpowered and manipulated . . . [and] become a team mascot is totally unthinkable. (Quoted in Wood 1998, 67)

I draw attention to this piece to illustrate Heap of Birds' direct approach and political tactics, but also to introduce the embedded spatial critiques within such

work. *American Leagues* may not be immediately recognized as a spatial project, seeming to be confined to the realms of the cultural or political. Yet given the relationships among culture, politics, and space, this work is highly attuned to a colonial and racialized terrain that shapes the very experience of Native peoples (indeed all peoples) and the ways in which indigeneity figures into dominant constructions of nation, citizenship, Americanness, and the reach and force of discourse. As Lucy Lippard points out about his work, "even when the subject appears to be something else, land is the bottom line" (Lippard 2008, 22–23). This might be expected, since the positionality of Native peoples in the United States and the material impacts of colonialism and racism are directly rooted in the spatial projects that craft the nation. In relation to mascots, this frame further helps explain why "Indians" are needed to secure American identities, how Native peoples are narrated with that history, and how it requires the dismissal of tribal territory and sovereignty toward models of multicultural citizenship. Mascots are symbolic tools for narrating the consolidation of a national landscape and the exultation of a supposedly equalized multiracial citizenry.

Compared with *American Leagues*, much of Heap of Birds' work tackles spatiality and its relationship to indigeneity in a much more explicit manner. His creations tend to reflect an engagement via the medium itself, in that they fully embrace the form of installation rather than museum art. Consider one of his early set of works, the "Your Host" series. Starting in 1988, he installed a series of signs in New York's City Hall Park. Heap of Birds borrows discursive authority from public signage to re-announce Native spaces under the very feet of and everywhere surrounding onlookers, visitors, and passersby. This series has now been extended for three decades in places across the United States and around the globe, with the latest being installed in Anchorage. As in the original New York installation and every site-specific installation since, the Anchorage signs reference the indigenous peoples of what is now a US state: Haida, Tsimshian, and Unangax (Slocum 2007). We first see the place-name "Alaska" presented backward, intentionally causing pause and rendering the familiar strange, perhaps undoing this name as we read it backward. This attention-catching callout or hailing of the public is followed by a simple five-word phrase: "Today Your Host/Is/Unangax."

The signs remind residents that they are being "hosted" by the respective local indigenous group. Their messages are articulated in a standardized, almost unnoticeable "wet grass" park sign format (see fig. 5.3). There is no further

explanation, certainly no apologies, and no explicit direction on what to do with such information. The work expects, perhaps, that the reader simply absorb and understand the information provided. The intent, of course, is that such information will initiate the kind of courtesy and deference that any guest should show toward a host. Hosting practiced here and now. Which begs the question for the viewer: Is *guesting* being practiced? Regardless of reception, Heap of Birds' signs proclaim in dramatic fashion the unequivocal persistence of indigenous geographies in a place as culturally complex, historically layered, and materially dense as New York City, as well as in a place undeniably marked with Native presence like Alaska. They also implicate everyone who can read the signs in now deciding how they will re-navigate this re-grounding.

While the simplicity of his "Your Host" series does not extensively interrogate the complex and layered histories and their spatial implications, it does call for recognition and some form of contemporary engagement. What does one do when confronted with indigenous presence precisely where it is least expected, in urban centers and in the most successful regions of removal and colonial settlement? The fact that Heap of Birds includes the word "Today" in his selectively sparse textual creations elegantly indicates its importance to the overall message and intended effect on the viewer. He is firmly pointing to the settler colonial present, because settler spatialities are ongoing, as are indigenous ones. His method of creating such pieces reflects this framing as he intentionally works with local tribal peoples to responsibly incorporate their cultures, lands, languages, and peoples as part of his interventions (Blomley and Heap of Birds 2004, 800). He has often referred to his approach as an explicit effort to "commemorate or honor nations" (Heap of Birds 1999). "The first step," he tells us, "is to bring the indigenous presence back to lands and urban sites which were lost to the white invasion" (Blomley and Heap of Birds 2004, 800). Clearly, he is drawing attention to an occupation, now. Today.

Rather than accepting that his work is somehow objectively politically charged, Heap of Birds reframes settler geographies as being the charged sites of colonization and indigenous displacement that require overdue investigation. Thus, "cities are locations of the sign pieces because often the sites within cities have high value because of the colonial power's wealth. They are charged locations that can be implicated in an unsavory history of conquest" (Blomley and Heap of Birds 2004, 800). In *Reclaim* (1996), for example, he borrows aesthetic force from standard green and white highway mileage signs by placing his appropriated sign along the roadside (see fig. 5.4). Under commission of the

Neuberger Museum in Purchase, New York, the sign was placed at the main entry of Purchase University grounds, making it available twenty-four hours a day at the intersection of Lincoln Avenue and the West Road portion of the main campus loop. In contrast to the "wet grass" sign, the text of this piece more explicitly interrogates indigenous geographies and boldly suggests decolonized spatial futurities.

On the one hand Heap of Birds asks about the spatial fate of New York. Purchased? Stolen? While the piece is ostensibly solely about the geography of what becomes New York, it actually expects the viewer to locate themselves (individually, collectively) in relation to the land. For the Biennial Exhibition at the Neuberger, Heap of Birds argues that his mock interstate sign marks "vehicular movements over colonized lands, methods of territorial procurement and the spiritual reinstatement of rightful indigenous awareness within the State of New York" (Neuberger Museum 1997, 8). In short, it pushes us to note our assigned meanings or assessments of this space. In placing question marks in the usual mileage position, he provokes an open-ended response not only to the question of history, but also to the means by which we can measure when we might (or might not) arrive at our destination.

The final indicator, "Reclaimed?," in particular, hints at the ongoing refusal of Native peoples to simply concede the loss of their lands. Consider the exceeding relevance of persistent Iroquois claims to sovereignty, most recently publicized via their refusal to attend an international lacrosse tournament when England would not recognize their passports (Kaplan 2010). Heap of Birds offers us brief insight into the continued understanding of Iroquois geographies, those being expressed and acted on, and those being kept in the sovereign imagination awaiting future manifestation. Reclamation already practiced, and a possible future reclamation of additional material consequence. In essence, Heap of Birds merely pulls back a colonial veil that obscures what is already practiced, even if only within a cultural framework of indigenous communities largely denied by others. As he acknowledges, he is just "there to translate it" (Heap of Birds 1999).

Heap of Birds' art explicitly works to both assert Native geographies and to uncover the role of mainstream spatial markers in producing and maintaining a particular, racialized, and sanitized version of colonization. He re-marks what seem to be public signs normally considered little more than civic infrastructure and navigational aids, subverts the standard messages, and reveals standard signs as works of popular culture and settler functionality. He readily recognizes their constructive power and therefore the appropriative value of such mechanisms,



since public "signs are all thought to be true" by the average citizen (Rushing III 2005, 376). Like Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (discussed in the previous chapter), Heap of Birds crafts an engagement that almost requires viewers to pause and reflect on what they are seeing. Those moments of pause produce, at the very least, inquiry about the message and the intended relationship between the viewer and sign.

### *No Coffee Cups and T-Shirts*

Bob Haozous (Chiricahua Nde'/Apache, Diné, Spanish, and English) offers us a variation of memorials like that produced by Cutshall, and a different approach to public installation work addressing indigenous space. Haozous is a highly regarded sculptor and public installation artist from a family of artists, most prominently including his late father and fellow sculptor Allan Houser. He draws from a range of materials, although I focus on just one of his metalwork sculptures that broadly represents his signature medium and style. As with Heap of Birds and Quick-to-See Smith, many of Haozous's pieces reference familiar objects reworked to beg greater depth of engagement with its viewer. Whereas Heap of Birds directly appropriates authoritative directives in the form of street and public information signs, in the work I address here, Haozous references both memorials and the aesthetic and property-claiming function of spatial markers like southwestern ranch gates.

Haozous produces what might be called monuments, although his large-scale sculptures are more focused on raising hard questions than simple "remembering." This flies in the face of most memorials, which work to arrest meaning, even while his pieces do actively deploy the tactics of memorialization and memory-making.

*Gate/Negate* (2000) is currently on loan with the Santa Fe Capitol Art Foundation and rests on the northeast capitol grounds. This bronze piece is eighteen feet tall and composed of two main elements: a solid trapezoidal base and a rectangular frame or "gate" partly filled with a number of smaller, individual cutout shapes. The gate frame itself is sparse and largely utilitarian, save the chain rings fastened to the top corners. Haozous describes his general use of rings or chains as a "symbol of slavery or oppression" provided to offer viewers "handholds, or clues into the [political nature of the] piece" (Anon. 1990). The cutout shapes within the gate's outlining frame provide its main visual complexity; dollar signs and crosses interconnect a dozen negative-space human profile silhouette

plates. The silhouette plates are also embellished by cutout airplanes flying skyward, flattened stars, and bulging spheres (that he identifies as bullet holes). As another clue to the political nature of the work, a segment of razor wire tops the gate. The trapezoidal base (described below) is constructed out of corrugated sheets with writing hand painted across all four of the visible surfaces.

In all, *Gate/Negate* is positioned and shaped like a memorial or monument, although Dean Rader notes that the staff of the art collection, while uncertain of the piece's meaning, assured him "that it was not a 'monument'" (Rader 2011, 199). Much like the Indian Memorial at the Little Bighorn Battlefield, however, this would-be memorial counterpoints nationalistic remembrances that depend on the logic of colonialism. Consider, briefly, Haozous's insistence on placing razor wire atop *Cultural Crossroads of the Americas* (1996), among other of his works. Razor wire sometimes makes all the difference, it seems, between receptivity and trouble-making. In *Cultural Crossroads*, Haozous took a page out of Heap of Birds' book, constructing a twenty-six-by-twenty-nine-foot billboard for public engagement in conjunction with the University of New Mexico and the city-funded Art in Public Places program. The powerful iron cutout swiftly tackles the US-Mexico border, environmental degradation, capitalism, globalization, indigeneity, and culture. The inclusion of razor wire, however, became the breaking point for some university representatives, who saw the addition as a symbol of divisiveness and conflict rather than the image of multiculturalism and connection they desired (Mithlo 1998, 59).

The ensuing conflict over political interpretations and artistic integrity led to a nasty court battle, after which Haozous was forced to remove the razor wire or risk being denied nearly half his commission. Native studies and art scholar Nancy Mithlo, Haozous' spouse and sometime chronicler, quotes Haozous as saying that it is "absolutely essential" for a Native artist "to remain honest—either that or make coffee cups and T-shirts" (Mithlo 1998, 60). Reluctantly conceding in this case, he argued that his detractors "just want to make art digestible to the tourist crowd" (Willdorf 2000). Mithlo points out that while razor wire was indeed used with the imprisonment of Nde' peoples, it was also used by the Nde' for their cattle ranching (Mithlo 1998, 59). She rightly suggests that the meaning of this material is not easily fixed. It is certainly true that determining what and when objects represent divisiveness is a subjective assessment and a frequent tool of political grandstanding, especially when considering artistic creations.

Given Haozous's intentional use of art as cultural critique, however, I do lean toward reading its inclusion as intentionally provocative, which is still neither



equivalent to divisive nor justification for censure. Haozous has made it clear that in pieces like *Gate/Negate* he uses “a coil of razor wire symbolizing our [US] isolationism,” which is another way of noticing the policing of space and “appropriate” spatialities (Haozous 2007). The political edge to Haozous’s work represents its most compelling element. Without this, it fails to be coherent. So, in the case of *Cultural Crossroads*, I take Haozous’s word that he sees and uses symbols of barriers, what he calls “antiquated obstacles,” in order to initiate critique (Haozous 2000). Illustrating the most immediate, exclusionary function of the gate, Haozous, particularly through the use of razor wire, draws attention to structures of separation as well as to the racialized and settler project of proclaiming land rights. The razor clearly symbolizes the intertwined sense of both spatial control and violence.

Gates can be and are used simultaneously as points of denial and as points of invitation and welcoming. In *Gate/Negate*, we see a tension of meaning present in the penetrable iron gate (or window/picture frame) sitting atop the impassible base. The gate presents the passage or site of entry for immigrants and settlers who have come to occupy the US American territories and other indigenous lands. Thus, the gate is a doorway, the place for entrance. This parallels the “spirit gate” element of the Indian Memorial at the Little Bighorn Battlefield, which also references gates as intentional opportunities for movement rather than just mechanisms designed for exclusion. The fluidity, movement, and spatial accessibility of the gate portion of *Gate/Negate* reflects opportunity for connection as it presents the wholesale transformation and mobility of American space crafted through immigration and settlement.

In this piece, however, Haozous is not necessarily interested in reconciliation or extending welcome in a simple manner. That remains, as-yet at least, one step away. Before connections can be made, the disjuncture must be mapped and mended. As the title asserts, the key concepts in this piece are the gate and the act of negation. As a historical mechanism for controlling access to land and nationhood, and as the razor wire crown suggests, entry is not guaranteed. Access is not always welcomed, or without risk. Thus, the gate is a doorway, but in this case, as the site for exclusion, the threshold site where one may be denied. Further, being permitted initial entrance does not preclude later expulsion. Further still, any shared formality of entrance does not promise equal experience within. This is especially true since different bodies carry “borders” with them that serve as both shorthand and mechanism for spatial orders (Chang 1997).

In short, the gate is a flexible tool of control that shifts according to specific and varying interests or conditions and that can signify a spectrum of differential modes of inclusion and exclusion. Indigenous peoples, as the strangest and most ironic of admissions to the US nation-state, exemplify how difference shapes encounters with the gate in the modern world. Haozous subtly hints at this layered and ongoing complexity in the carefully reconstructed “ethnic” and “sexed” (male and female) portrait silhouette plates. These plates nicely reference racial typology guides based on the “science” of physiognomy once used to assist in distinguishing between groups and accurately assessing (really, assigning) racial character traits, while also mirroring the related eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth-century domestic art of silhouette portraiture commonly referred to as “shadows.”

### *Wrought Irony*

In *Gate/Negate*, Haozous simulates a conversation about movement, immigration, and access by insisting on the question of indigeneity via the trapezoidal base of this sculpture. Through the relationship between gate and base, he reminds us of our individual and collective implication in enacting this specific form of negation; the contemporary reproduction and maintenance of colonization and occupation. This dialogue between base and gate also represents larger tensions among the multicultural state, colonization, and indigenous geographies. In all, Haozous crafts a representation of how the so-called founding of democracy and liberty is materially framed by colonialism’s logic of elimination, and thus has not resolved settler colonialism’s contradiction of indigeneity.

To elaborate this point a bit, I want to first say more about the gate portion and take note of Haozous’s use of metal cutout work in relation to southwestern ranch gates. Although he has not, so far as I can determine, made this linkage, he seems to intuitively evoke the form and sentiment of these unique southwestern structures found so prominently in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas—all places where indigenous and colonial spaces have more explicitly and intimately overlapped in mutually defining fashion for half a millennium.

Haozous masterfully mimics and redirects the unique flat iron cutouts and silhouette style in the way iron work gates have long decorated and embellished the entryways

of expansive ranch lands (see fig. 5.8). Yet ranch gates are specific to non-Native dominated space. As Daniel Olsen and Henk van Assen note, based on their extensive travels through the rural ranchlands of the southwest, “the fewest gates appeared on Native American reservations” (Olsen and van Assen 2009, 23). Let me be clear that Native people have been ranchers and “cowboys” for generations. Whether Native or not, however, the rancher who places a gate at the entrance of an enclosed territory participates in a European American tradition bringing together American, English, Mexican, and Spanish values of private property, economics, and cattle ranging (Olsen and van Assen 2009). The lack of precontact land ownership practices, along with the institutionalized dispossession of Native communities of the most productive and desirable grazing lands, means such gates are a rarity in Native America. “In contrast to the dominant culture,” Olsen and van Assen suggest, “Native Americans apparently do not feel the need to put their name big on their land” (Olsen and van Assen 2009, 23). In short, such signs tell us something about how spatiality operates and manifests differently in these cultural and racialized contexts.

Geographer Kenneth Helphand goes on to consider “what is being commemorated” by the ranch gates. He quickly concludes that the southwestern ranch gate is a marker of dispossession itself, noting that for non-Natives “settling the land was itself [seen as] a triumph, accomplished at the expense of the native inhabitants. Settlers built and established a place in the landscape, and made a home and an economic enterprise, for a ranch is both. The passing under an arch/gate celebrates an event, the triumph of the pioneers’ arduous and difficult work” (Olsen and van Assen 2009, 84). In a 1929 text, *Wrought Iron in Architecture*, Gerald K. Geerlings argues that decorative ironwork did not take form in the United States until after conquest was secure. After noting the more “simple, practical nature” of most early American ironwork in contrast to its aesthetically complex European counterparts, he states without irony that the “more ornate forms—balconies, fences, gates, grilles—were a development of the late eighteenth century, when the worries of too much Indian and too little corn had been mitigated” (Geerlings 1983, 143). While Geerlings is focused on urban ironwork and its development on the east coast, his observation indicates that the craft and material production of decorative ironwork including ranch gates is dependent on colonization and Native dispossession. Wrought iron art emerges precisely to mark spaces of indigenous elimination. Thus, such work is precluded before Native elimination (however incomplete in actuality). Haozous’s (intentional or coincidental)

allusion to these metalwork techniques and ranch gate aesthetics as tools in the critique of settler colonialism, then, offers a profound inversion. Like Heap of Birds and Terrance Guardipee (discussed in chapter 4), Haozous reappropriates and deploys colonial tools to draw attention to the process of colonization and then make anticolonial declarations.

Haozous’s inversions extend to the identities crafted by and through structures of Western individualism. All ranch gates can be read as repeating and re-marking spaces of colonization and elimination, and are thus clearly productive of spaces and larger social identities. Daniel Olsen observes how iron ranch gates rely on a constructed model of self-identity whereby an individual can say “[I] don’t need others to define me” and thus is capable of “determining his or her own context . . . [and] constructing their own identity” (Olsen and van Assen 2009, 25). This is ironic, as Lippard notes, since a great deal of ranch lands are actually leased out public lands generated by socially, legally, and politically engineered acts of colonialism and managed by governmental oversight and contract. Many reservation lands are likewise leased to ranchers, offering perhaps the most blatantly state-based power-laden spatial arrangement even under trust land status. As a whole, ranching is heavily subsidized and thus deeply situated as a socially managed practice (Olsen and van Assen 2009, 34).

In her introduction to *Ranch Gates of the Southwest*, Lucy Lippard notes that despite the seemingly utilitarian nature of this vernacular ranch gate art, which serves as warning sign against trespass, “the notion of *cultural* trespassing . . . is inherent” (Olsen and van Assen 2009, 33; emphasis original). The inherent trespass indirectly signals that the ranch is anything but the exclusive work of American individualism. Set against the understanding that the ranchers have unproblematically and rightfully become part of the land through their own hard work and collective cultural inheritance, many ranchers actively “[collect] the ‘Indian things’ found on ‘their’ lands.” The contradiction of collecting indigenous “artifacts” on lands claimed as one’s own highlights the tensions Haozous notices when he counters that “the self-made man in a country of immigrants thinks he owns himself, but he is only divorced from his past” (McCloud 1995). I would argue that “he” is divorced from the present as well, given the continued interrelations necessary not just for social standing and legal recognition of title, but also for the continuation of the American individualist prototype.

It is in this light that Helphand situates the ranch as a postbellum institution, and notes that “livestock as capital converted the western grasslands into

a commodity" (Olsen and van Assen 2009, 67). He also notes the radical and ironic exchange of one "grazing bovine" (the bison) for another (the cow), which parallels the exchange of one way of life and one group of people for another on this land. Despite the sense that hardworking ranch hands carved out these exchanged realities by sweat and toil alone, numerous social structures and support mechanisms actively helped to produce the large-scale national outcomes and fulfill coherent geographic projects, including the Homestead Act (and its legislative extensions), the establishment of regional and national parks (for example, Yosemite in 1864, Yellowstone in 1872), the ongoing creation of reservations, Indian allotment policies (creating "surplus" lands from 1882–1934), Exclusion and Alien Land laws targeting Asian immigrants and peoples, and the denial of emancipation land promises after the Civil War (Romm 2002). All of this constitutes a thoroughly racialized and restricted process. Together these policies thereby structured and produced a profoundly racialized national geography, depended on a colonial reconfiguration of space, and allowed some individuals access to land and commerce and denied access to others. Even more fundamentally, all such access or restriction depended on Native dispossession.

### *Silence Is Not Innocence*

In *Gate/Negate*, we see a repeat appearance of razor wire as Haozous explicitly works out his frustrations over the court proceedings and the reception of his concepts embedded in *Cultural Crossroads* (Haozous 2007). In yet another politically direct feature of *Gate/Negate*, Haozous presents a base (perhaps tombstone) marked with 460 "extinct" victims of European contact and settlement. He paints the names of Native nations that literally perished under the weight of American colonization. In this way, the base and the entire piece function as a historic atlas of settlement and depopulation on this continent. Recalling their unknown and unspoken extinctions (at least as culturally distinct peoples) serves as the base of this monument, and thereby represents the foundation of the nation. The gate, structured much like a glassless window frame, rests firmly on this negation, a negation that is now actually doubled; the physical and cultural elimination of those peoples replicated by the subsequent, ongoing negation of their name and this history. Even when memorialized here by Haozous, these names will be obscure to most viewers. Without guidance, few

will connect the names to indigenous peoples of North America. During his visit, Rader noted that fellow viewers ultimately concluded the names were simply "made up" (Rader 2011, 199). After several days of speaking to visitors about the symbolism of the extinct tribes while he painted the names, Haozous "left with the realization that most viewers have no knowledge of a true American history" and "feel no responsibility for what has and is continually happening to indigenous people world wide" (Haozous 2007).

If that history and the spatial implications are recognized, however, a viewer can discern an important relationship between the gate and negation. Only when supported by such indigenous negation can the gate offer entry/refusal to those multiple ethnic groups who might pass through as immigrants, stretching back to the first European arrivals and extending forward to current immigrants from across the globe. Those immigrant entries can then overwrite the forced entries (enslaved peoples and colonial subjects) that forged the colonial encounter and foreclosed indigenous futures and spaces. Haozous offers a documentation of these historic and spatial processes, of movement and land, of ethnicity and nationhood. He outlines precisely the challenges of those who are interested in social justice and yet fail to simultaneously work to reconcile indigeneity.

Unlike a standard memorial, Haozous's base/tombstone transgresses and remembers those who have been actively and purposefully forgotten, and by doing so refuses those Native eliminations that are extended and repeated through mundane and continual acts of forgetting. He offers a kind of anti-memorial dedicated to remembering what the settler colonial nation must forget to pursue its teleological thrust into a future where Indians/Native peoples are already and have long been rendered absent. In Rader's reading of this same piece, he similarly deduces that *Gate/Negate* effectively "rewrites the present by un-erasing the past" (Rader 2011, 200). In a geographic sense, however, Haozous is also remaking the nation by remapping Native land and recentering their denied presence. Given the scale of this sculpture, viewers will come most physically face-to-face with this absence/presence in the form of the painted base before their attention is ultimately drawn upward to the gate. Haozous clearly intends to intervene as he names the tribes, even if he can neither fill the immense and intentional voids of national forgetting nor reclaim indigenous lands.

The late anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that memorials and representations of the past are in fact really about the here and now (Trouillot

1995). They are most fundamentally moments of articulation about ourselves, and thus their meaning is largely determined by what we do today regarding the structures of power and disempowerment and our participation in producing inequalities and committing acts of violence. Otherwise we “renew” them. Haozous suggests this same danger of renewals in his observations of the viewers encountering his sculpture. This stance of understanding history-as-present removes us from pretending to take “objective” positions or from discovering historical Truth by improved methods or data, and thus requires we confront our ongoing and continually renewed complicities in narrating interconnected pasts and presents. As Trouillot says,

The historicity of the human condition also requires that practices of power and domination be renewed. It is that renewal that should concern us most, even if in the name of our pasts. The so-called legacies of past horrors—slavery, colonialism, or the Holocaust—are possible only because of that renewal. And that renewal occurs only in the present. Thus, even in relation to The Past our authenticity resides in the struggles of our present. Only in that present can we be true or false to the past we choose to acknowledge. (Trouillot 1995, 151)

As an extension of this point, then, the dismissal and repeated dis-remembering of Native dispossession impacts those tribes still present today, whose own dispossession (partial or complete) also supports the settler colonial nation’s gate of entry.

The installation of memory of the “extinct” tribes signals more than just a lament of the losses of colonialism. In fact, they *must* stand as more than just an observation of historic violence, population decimation, land struggles, and the unmaking of those tribes’ geographies. Colonization does not rest in the past, which is precisely where it is continually relegated by the dominant society. This is why it is easy to remain silent on issues of colonization. Returning to Patrick Wolfe’s articulation once again, Haozous presents us with an understanding of colonialism as process, a process that marches forward to maintain many of its spoils. The most valuable of these spoils, of course, is the land and the ongoing spatialities generated from the relationship with that land, including the nation-state itself. This memorialization thereby stands testimony to the ongoing struggles over indigenous geographies and colonial landscapes and serves as continuing witness to the process rather than to a concluded, past event.

At its current Santa Fe location, *Gate/Negate* has been placed near the main entryway to the capitol grounds, along the edge of the sidewalk and adjacent to the main parking lot, where one would be hard-pressed to ignore it. In presenting his narrative of immigration, nation, conquest, and colonial space, Haozous relies on a certain level of didacticism, even though or perhaps precisely because the extinguished tribal names and overall message confounds many viewers. This anticipated ignorance and naïveté leads Haozous to magnify his statements via sheer size, as well as through the durability of metal medium. In an interview about an explicitly environmental installation that Haozous placed at the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian (also in Santa Fe), he confessed that “the American public is naïve. Bigger is better when there is a statement behind it” (McCloud 1995). This interest in scale seems a shared family ethic, as Haozous’s father, Allan Houser, once explained that his increasingly larger sculptures fed an artistic purpose: “Working in a larger scale, I can express myself much better” (Hirschfelder n.d.).

Haozous, while certainly finding an aesthetic expression through scale, is also trying to eliminate silence and ignorance. He wrestles with obscure presentation and resistance to remembering forgotten memories by producing massive and enduring installations inviting encounter and interrogation. As Trouillot lamented elsewhere, silence now passes for innocence: “One now is innocent until proven guilty. Thus, claims of innocence can take the shape of silence” (Trouillot 2003, 28). By focusing on the work of the gate and the renewals of negation, Haozous calls out this silence. He dismisses such silence as being equal to innocence.