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BOOK REVIEWS

The Future of Digital Data, Heritage and Curation in a More-than-Human World

Fiona R. Cameron.

Abingdon: Routledge, 2021.

In *Climate Change and Museum Futures*, co-edited by Fiona R. Cameron and Brett Neilson and published by Routledge in 2017, Cameron addresses climate change and other ecological issues, raising practical methods and visions for museums that are not centered around humans. In the 2021 monograph *The Future of Digital Data, Heritage and Curation in a More-than-Human World*, Cameron specifically focuses on the digital in the museum arena, thinking beyond its use for humans and eloquently illustrating the impossible but valuable work involved in documenting its whole “life.” It is thought-provoking to see the depth of Cameron’s thinking in terms of a more-than-human ontology of the digital on the one hand, and to get a refreshing framework for curating and collecting the digital (and more) on the other.

In order to redefine the concept of the “object” for the digital realm, Cameron traces threads of thinking that gave birth to the ideal of democratized museums and to the participatory culture that demands museums produce and share information proactively. The digital is naturally considered to represent the physical, but in an unsatisfactory manner, so the societal and cultural aspects of digital data have therefore been increasingly emphasized. The book critiques the current framing of digital cultural heritage and argues that digital data should not be defined only in terms of their function, but as “post-object forms operating in experience, in process, made up of diverse coordinates, and as domains of influencing they co-activate as they emerge” (118).

Focusing on duration and change, Cameron carefully breaks down every step involved in taking

care of the life of the digital, from its birth out of minerals in the earth to its afterlife, including changing views towards the interpretations of an object. In her understanding, curating and documenting become “a matter of crafting and composing, of thinking and making ontologies” (279). Such an idea attracted me because it not only offers a critical framework to care for digital collections, but also works as a useful guide for researchers who also see their research object as constantly changing, definable only by a complex network of coordinates.

For instance, I work mainly with socially-engaged art, where practitioners remain alert to process and change strategies accordingly, with various individuals involved and usually without predetermined ending dates. In addition to examining project vision and what activities are actually carried out, the experience of different individuals and long-term follow-up of both the social issues involved and those individual experiences are all inextricable components of a project, rather than being merely a documentation of it (Helguera 2011), even as documentation is necessary to decide not only the ethics but also the aesthetics of a project, allowing for more interpretations. Similarly, Cameron proposes that the interpretation of the significance of digital collections should be based on “multiple perspectives” (211). At the same time, like digital collections, socially-engaged art is always involved in various initiatives, and documenting how it unfolds is also a necessary step toward its meaning-making. Representation has implications for the meaning-making of an object too. Cameron acutely points out the need to include the “intentions of creators and curators” (211) in the different iterations of an object display when collecting. What is collected is not only the object itself, but the discourse in relation to it. This requires a researcher to give a distanced view of every site of representation.



In addition to following the life trajectory of the digital, Cameron's work, in particular, emphasizes the importance of including plural ontological understandings when working with digital collections. For instance, she uses the example of a Māori taonga, or treasure, namely the *Te Kani-a-Takirau* ancestral meeting house from Aotearoa New Zealand, and explains how the life force of the ancestors, the hau, is embodied in digital forms and making new connections. Here, Cameron illustrates that digital cultural heritage does not necessarily reconnect with loss or the past. Rather, it represents a different mode of being that is no less real than physical materials and, moreover, it can connect to the future. The digital would not normally be considered heritage in a museum setting, so collecting procedures should, therefore, reflect and try to understand such different ontologies (Chapter 2). Creating situations for such understanding requires great labor and care. I sense throughout the book a respect for different worldings formed by the digital and an appeal to facilitate understanding of different cultures.

In terms of practical strategy, Cameron points out the technical conditions that support the existence of a digital object, including its "bitstreams, file formats, media and computational supports and its relay systems" (211). Such differentiation, rather than treating the digital as an entity, has fostered innovative practices in collecting. The book uses the example of the Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum in the US and their efforts to open-source the bitstream of its collection, and the cases where institutions collect AI Robert Harmony's multiple versions of bitstream, which uses a Creative Commons license that enables users to replicate, modify, and transport the metadata to other hardware platforms and devices. At the same time, the transitory nature of digital data is an obvious condition we are facing. Referring to former US President Donald Trump's Twitter behavior, Cameron reminds us of the necessity of anticipatory heritagization, so we do not lose history when a tweet is deleted.

Overall, this book raises a challenge to a universal standard of preservation and calls for an awareness of, and multiple solutions to, the changing nature of digital collection. Readers should not expect a detailed how-to guide; specific action plans can only be developed based on the specific intentions of the practitioners through the many insightful working directions and frameworks this

book offers. It raises new requirements for practitioners: to care for, to research, and to create an understanding of digital collections.

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What Photographs Do: The Making and Remaking of Museum Cultures
Elizabeth Edwards and Ella Ravilious, eds.
London: UCL Press, 2022.

What Photographs Do explores how museums are defined through their photographic practices by asking the questions: what are photographs doing in museums? What photographic practices are valued? What hierarchies do these biases reflect? It focuses not on formally accessioned collections of photographs, but on photographic "non-collections"—ubiquitous yet invisible photographs that were made, acquired, or assembled as archives or related documents to aid the understanding of collections. Sequestered to the margins of curatorial practice, these photographs raise complex and ambiguous questions about the ways in which value and meaning are made around objects and collections through multiple, overlapping layers: a museum's "photographic ecosystem."

These dynamics are explored through the prism of the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), whose long-standing relationship with photography was set in motion by its first director, Henry Cole. Envisioning the V&A as a testament to art and design, Cole commissioned the best to be reproduced and collected as photographs. V&A's commitment to photography wavered significantly after Cole's retirement, but the photographic ecosystems that he set in place have continued in many distributed forms.

Edwards and Ravilious urge us to view the V&A not as an idiosyncratic example, but as a case study of practices that define all museums to a greater or lesser extent. They emphasize aspects of the V&A's photographic ecosystem that are common to all

museums, choosing not to address its large-scale commercial image licensing or its expansive collection of fine art photography. With these parameters, the editors encourage us to use this volume as a starting point for more and similar institutional studies.

In terms of approach, the volume is not a conventional academic study. It is situated in the *realpolitik* of museum practices and keeps its theory close to the skills and voices that make museum knowledge visible. It achieves this through the inclusion of shorter essays, case studies, and interviews, in addition to longer chapters. Studio photographers, image managers, conservators, and non-photographic curators from across the V&A provide an insight into their engagement with photography, and how it constitutes the museum's photographic ecosystem. All of the volume's contributors have lived experience of the processes through which photographs have been "used, celebrated, marginalised, reproduced, re-engaged, [and] circulated" at the V&A, and made to work within its evolving ethos. Merging these experiences with their knowledge of the museum's history and the collections in its care, the contributors to this volume show how the V&A has been defined through its photographic practices.

The volume is thematically divided into six parts. Part one, "Disseminations," explores the processes, practices, and agendas through which objects in the collections at the V&A have been transformed through different formats like black and white postcards, museum catalogues, and online collections portals. Developing this theme, "Collections," focuses on three museum photographers previously involved in the processes of transforming objects. An insight into their practices shows us that the very processes used to create "non-collections" are also used to create "collections," thus blurring the boundaries between the two concepts.

In the next three parts of the volume, we are provided with examples of collections and non-collections that have transgressed their categorical boundaries—that have been valued, devalued, and revalued. Divia Patel shares her experiences of working with an archive of sixty thousand nineteenth-century photographs of South Asian architecture that has gone through these evaluative processes over the course of her life at the V&A. Steve Woodhouse tells us about a project that he led to digitize the V&A's Guard Books, which were once used to record all the photographic activity of

the museum, but are now considered an important resource for its history. Ella Ravilious discusses the shifting values attributed to the Kington Parkes Bequest, a research collection on modern sculpture. And Kate Hay considers the visual archive of eighty-five thousand images that the V&A's Furniture Department had collated from around the 1960s to the 1980s, and that had been left obsolete until its recent reassessment.

Moving away from historical collections and non-collections, contributors to part five focus on the V&A's imaging practices in the present, and its relationship to the digital. George Eksts has photographed the backs of all the prints, drawings, paintings, and photographs that he has digitized. Failing to find a home for the former images at the V&A, he started sharing them on Instagram. He underlines the biases prevalent in attributing values to photographs at museums and speculates on the possibilities for a dialog between the museum's official platforms for sharing collections, and unofficial ones like his Instagram. Catherine Troiano introduces another dilemma pertinent to the digital in museum collections. She discusses the problems arising in the accessioning of a digitally-born artwork and the lack of infrastructures in place in museums for this. Both Eksts and Troiano highlight that museums do not have solutions for looking after non-collections emerging in the present.

Whilst the theoretical concepts of this volume are thoroughly explored across diverse contributions, Edwards and Ravilious do not clearly define collections, non-collections, and the photographic ecosystem. Readers might benefit from reading this volume in tandem with Edwards' previous work, *Thoughts on the "Non-Collections" of the Archival Ecosystem* (2019). Some of the contributions also seem out of place in their thematic sections. For example, the interview with Richard Davis exploring the interaction of curatorial value and photographic skill in museum publications might fit more aptly in "Disseminations" than in "Digital."

This volume has great scope and will be particularly relevant to institutions with an expansive photographic culture and to museum professionals with responsibilities for collections and non-collections of photographs.

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The Aftermaths of Participation: Outcomes and Consequences of Participatory Work with Forced Migrants in Museums.

Susanne Boersma.

Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2023.

In response to the so-called “refugee crisis” in Europe in the past decade, many European museums have both turned their gaze inwards to (re-)consider their roles, missions, and practices as contributors to sociopolitical debates, as well as taken a greater interest in narratives of (forced) migration. Moreover, the participatory turn in museum practice has led to increased engagement with forced migrants as contributors when telling such narratives and putting them on display.

In *The Aftermaths of Participation*, Susanne Boersma discusses the development, experiences, and remnants of four participatory projects in which forced migrants contributed to, or created (parts of), a museum exhibition. Her analysis is built around the project participants’ retrospective experiences and reflections of partaking in their respective projects, standing in contrast to the significantly better documented experiences of museum practitioners concerning projects on forced migration. Her case studies span the years 2016–2018, encompassing four projects in three European countries, those being: Germany (“daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives,” by Museum Europäischer Kulturen); and “So sehe ich das...” by Museum Friedland), the United Kingdom (“Museum Takeover” by Leicester Museum and Art Gallery), and the Netherlands (“Aleppo” by Tropenmuseum).

The central analytical section of the book is divided into five chapters, which outstandingly combine diverse yet complementary analytical foci, devoted to both the practical and ethical challenges of participatory museum work. The analysis includes the “invitation” of communities discussed alongside the concepts of networking and the creation of the “Other” (Chapter 3); processes of empowerment and asymmetric power relations (Chapter 4); the creation of “safe spaces” (Chapter 5); the role of the museum in changing discourse, framed around its role in the authorized heritage discourse (Chapter 6); and the material and digital outputs of participatory projects (Chapter 7).

The book is a compelling and critical contribution to the existing body of work on participatory museum work, bringing forward practice-based

concerns within neo-colonialist institutions. Considering the construction of the “Other” in museums—as deeply rooted in neo-colonialist thought—Boersma draws attention to the representation of forced migrants in participatory projects. She scrutinizes practices that position migrants *only* as vulnerable, passive, and subjects of pity, and suggests that participatory projects, regardless of their good intentions, may confirm stereotypical and damaging media discourses rather than transcend or challenge them—particularly, she argues, if reducing migrants to biographies with a sole focus on their migration journey. With that, she notes that “museums should acknowledge that forced migration does not begin at Europe’s borders, nor do migrants only exist after crossing these borders” (172). The politics of the text are explicit, repeatedly returning to the questions of what stories are considered worthy of telling, who tells those stories, and through whose voice.

The analysis across all chapters is permeated by a focus on museum infrastructure—such as funding, institutional history, political contexts, and staff availability—and how such elements enable and constrain participatory practice. Boersma argues that the “infrastructure underlying museum practices are fundamental to the way museum practitioners work, but also to the aspects that are neglected by the museum” (226). Thereby she draws attention both to how infrastructure shapes participatory work in practice and the positioning of such work within museum institutions.

Moreover, Boersma engages with the notion of care, particularly drawing on Nuala Morse’s (2021) positioning of museums as spaces of social care. The focus on care is clearly interwoven throughout the book. It is particularly notable in Boersma’s move beyond solely investigating the “benefits” of participatory projects and in her emphasis that relationships within participatory spaces and careful museum practice are not necessarily straightforward, nor is that care one-directional. Indeed, she challenges the notion of participatory spaces as built solely on consensus, by drawing attention to the importance of tension and conflict—particularly in relation to depictions of forced migrants who are often perceived as one homogenous “community”—and argues that museum practitioners must allow for representation of such conflict in exhibitions. As such, the book offers significant insights into the relationships within participatory spaces through the prism of nuanced criticality of practice.

At the start of the book, Boersma reflects on her initial conviction of the positive contributions that participatory museum work had in the lives of forced migrants in Europe and that she “still think[s] museums can have a positive impact, but practitioners will need to reconsider some of their practices for future projects” (12). Although based on retrospective project participant accounts, the book is notably forward-looking in the way it brings together discussions of ethics and processes of decolonization, as well as social, caring, and sustainable practice. Even more so, Boersma’s conclusion that more socially responsible and responsive museums necessitate a shift in museum infrastructure to support *truly* participatory practice makes her book a valuable contribution to this growing body of theory and research.

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Museum Times: Changing Histories in South Africa

Leslie Witz.

New York: Berghahn Books, 2022.

Leslie Witz writes: “If there is one institution that flourished in post-apartheid Africa it is the museum” (1). This assertion in the opening line of his introduction highlights the fact that South Africa is indeed what it has been deemed to be, that is, the “capital” of museums in Africa. Relatively speaking, South Africa has more complex, diverse, better structured, and better resourced museums than other parts of the continent. It is clear that this institution has occupied a central role in the country’s cultural nationalisms and imaginations—colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid. With a long colonial history, it is the museums’ post-1994 trajectory, along with the country’s political change or transformation, that has been something to watch.

The museum and heritage sector engaged in an immediate process of reflexive change to adapt to the changed politico-social context of the post-apartheid nation. These efforts have been

widely covered in the literature on museum development in South Africa (Coombes 2004; Corsane 2004; Dubin 2006; Nuttall and Coetzee 1998). What has been missing in these analyses is a candid reflection on just what this change meant or still means as the country moved away from the euphoria of political and social change in 1994. With this publication, Witz has stepped in to fill this gap. Written in a fabulous autobiographical take, the reader is ushered into the world of museums in South Africa following the end of apartheid in 1994. If previous writings had delved into the politics and poetics of heritage and change, this is a candid, well detailed, and reflective look at an institution that has played (and continues to play) a central role in the reshaping of the cultural geographies of a new nation emerging from a traumatic past and dealing with apartheid’s lingering legacy.

As aptly captured in the introductory chapter, “Changing Museums, Reshaping Histories,” the central theme is how museums play a central role as “a site for changing histories” and how looking at these changes reflects “how histories are produced across different genres, the politics of constructing and contesting public histories and the forms of representation.” What has happened on the museum landscape in South Africa post-1994 is something to be emulated. However, twenty-some years after the moment of the end of apartheid, a different reflection, if a candid one, was long overdue. Adopting an autobiographical style, Witz delves into the behind-the-scenes processes, and manages, throughout the six chapters, to uncover the intricacies, dichotomies, contradictions, and successes involved. This is done through carefully chosen case studies that range from grassroots museum initiatives, such as the Lwandle Migrant Labor museum, tackling the intricacies, logistics, and representational modes entailed in “grassroots” museums that sought to highlight and foreground marginalized narratives (Chapter 1); to the Bartolomeu Dias Museum complex—“apartheid’s last museum”—which sought to commemorate the moment of “European founding” in South Africa (Chapter 2); the complex and prejudiced connection between natural history and cultural history within the Amathole Museum in the Eastern Cape province (Chapter 3); the Amathole Museum and the struggles for change (Chapter 4); the representation of nature, culture, and apartheid history at Robben Island (Chapter 5); and the persistent contentions related to the commemoration of the colonial foundations of South

Africa through the Jan van Riebeeck exhibition Y350, which sought to commemorate the arrival of the Dutch colonial figure in South Africa (Chapter 6). In all these chapters, Witz fluently provides intimate details and weaves through the narrative, foregrounding the intricacies and the back-of-house processes involved in remaking museums in the postcolonial, postapartheid context in Africa.

The substantive details and analysis in the chapters cover a broad range of issues and complexities related to the changing role that museums play, and how they remain sites of engagement in Africa. In going through these well curated chapters, what one realizes is the particular and detailed nature of each situation and case study. The analysis and reflection in all the chapters is as captivating as the writing. The writing is accessible, candid, and thoughtful. The signposting through the chapter titles says it all, that is, Chapter 1: “Remaking the Chameleon”; Chapter 2: “History on the Beach”; Chapter 3: “History at Sea”; Chapter 4: “A New Hippo for a New Nation”; Chapter 5: “The Museum, the Rabbit and National History”; and Chapter 6: “We Are Sick of Van Riebeeck.” Throughout these chapters, Witz manages to capture, and candidly reflect on, the efforts at change within the South African museum landscape, giving much more detailed content than we have seen in previous analyses. He excavates and captures the small but important details, while giving poignant analysis. He gravitates from what he calls “dilemma labels,” indicative of a system struggling to change in the post-1994 museums, to reflections on the structural/administrative attempts at change, in a country where museums had to be part of transforming the socio-economic agenda around reparation, inclusion, and diversity redress. The chosen cases lay bare the logistics, intricacies, paradoxes, and exigencies associated with the politically-charged imperatives of change, where the old and the new/emerging stakeholders made attempts to make things anew. One of these changes is reflected in Witz’s own academic/professional life, that is, the link between changing museums and the academy in South Africa. The book efficiently shows the role of museums in shaping and reshaping historical and cultural narratives, and that after a traumatic past, this ideal may be as messy as the past from which the institution emerged.

The writing style is candid, but concrete and specific, and always overlaid with eloquent reflective prose that makes reading it much more inviting. If anything, and as advocated by Hlongwane and

Ndlovu (2019), and as shown here by Witz, South Africa is still in search of new forms of museum-making, which is representative and inclusive of, and perhaps beneficial for, the previously marginalized sectors of South African society. The preface articulates the trajectory of museum development in South Africa, along with Witz’s own personal biography and long journey as an academic, particularly within the African Program in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS), run by the University of Western Cape (UWC) and the Robben Island Museum. The program is arguably the best regional capacity-building initiative in Africa so far, producing many museum professionals, and is currently active in different parts of the continent.

Overall, this book is invaluable for anyone wanting a well thought out, critical reflection on the recent developments and the reconfiguration of the museum landscape in post-apartheid South Africa. More importantly, the text highlights pertinent issues in African museums—the quests for transformation, and inclusion, within changing political, social, and cultural contexts. These issues reveal how museums still struggle to shake off their colonial/apartheid formulations, and how they remain active players in reshaping histories, or at least the people’s perception of them.

Every time I read and review a text, I try to think of what I would have included, or left out, if I was the author. The museum sector in South Africa, as elsewhere in the world, is wide-ranging and diverse, such that sometimes it becomes difficult to grasp and describe the intricate specificities. However, for this text, I found that the choice of museums covered very well the developments of museums in post-apartheid South Africa. The author is an engaged storyteller who balances detail, fact, reflection, and analysis. His close and intimate knowledge of the museum sector here is second to none, making this a worthwhile read for anyone seeking a robust analysis of the changing African museum world.

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Ancestors, Artefacts, Empire: Indigenous Australia in British and Irish Museums

Gaye Sculthorpe, Maria Nugent, and Howard Morphy, eds.

London and Canberra: The British Museum Press and the National Museum of Australia, 2021.

Ancestors, Artefacts, Empire is the culmination of many years of scrupulous research undertaken by a cooperative of leading Australian scholars who have scoured British and Irish museums in search of Australian Indigenous cultural collections. For those interested in Indigenous cultural history, the encounters between settler-colonists and Indigenous peoples, object biographies, and the different forms of value that gather around objects over time, this book provides a particularly insightful case study. *Ancestors, Artefacts, Empire* lays the groundwork for future research into Australian museum collections held overseas and more generally brings into focus the intertwined nature of Indigenous and imperial histories.

In brief, the book engages with the current themes of cultural restitution and repatriation by returning to sites where Indigenous cultural belongings have congregated—or perhaps more accurately been dispersed—across the British empire. In telling the stories of object movement, trade, exchange, and removal, the authors track a complex history of Indigenous Australia and its relationship to colonial desires and powers that is still yet to be properly understood. The sheer scale of the collections investigated, approximately thirty-nine thousand objects, emphasizes just how

much interrogative work is still needed to appropriately comprehend this history. *Ancestors, Artefacts, Empire* moves us much further along this path than any other previous survey or compilation of data concerning Australian collections held overseas to date. The meticulous research of Gaye Sculthorpe, Maria Nugent, and Howard Morphy has enabled a most comprehensive account of the collections, and this is augmented by contributing essays on specific objects or object categories by 22 Australianists, eight of whom are Australian Indigenous scholars from diverse communities. Their respective essays demonstrate just how powerful these objects can be in helping to reveal new understandings of the past, but they also urge us to rethink our present-day and future rights, responsibilities, and relationships. Interest in these objects extends well beyond claims to physical repatriation and takes the form of building better understandings of local social, cultural, and environmental histories, affording significant pedagogical value.

Divided into five parts, the structure is not so much chronological as thematic. Part one opens with an extensive introduction that delves into the value of ethnographic objects, the multiple histories that they can help generate, and a discussion of recent transformational changes to museum practice that emphasize greater Indigenous community access and avenues for interrogation. It also sets out the historical contexts of the assemblages examined. Part two contains six essays on the movement of objects from Australia to the UK and Ireland, and there is much to be learned from these contributions about the different trajectories that objects can take. Part three delves into the generative potential of these objects to rethink and recast histories of colonization and highlight collaborations and Indigenous agency, while Part four extends these ideas to the “unsettling” histories of Australia that feature critical narrations of punishment, violence, and “rough justice” meted out against Australia’s Indigenous peoples. Part five changes register to discuss different object aesthetics, artistry, and the performative qualities of objects, reminding the reader of the humanity embedded in these “things.”

Just as important, however, are the three appendices at the conclusion of the volume. Each is extremely valuable as a resource to help garner further collections research and will likely be critically important to Indigenous Australians interested in learning more about their cultural heritage. The essay from Indigenous scholar Michael Aird on

Queensland boomerangs (Chapter 23) and Jilda Andrew's contribution on fiber works from the Darling River country (Chapter 5), for example, provide early examples of the type of revelatory work relating to history, society, and ecology that this type of broadscale collections research will likely produce into the future. The first appendix provides an exhaustive list of all the collections located and investigated across the UK and Ireland that possess Australian material, enumerates the number of objects held by each institution, and briefly describes the contents. The second appendix lists each state or territory of Australia and then details the different collections that will be of most relevance to the Indigenous peoples of these regions. This is extremely useful, as researchers are often only interested in collections pertaining to very particular groups; indeed, venturing into the collections of others can be seen as a transgression of Indigenous knowledge practices. Appendix 3 offers further information and advice to researchers wanting to know more about the quality of documentation cited, defunct auction houses or institutions, and any notable private collections.

Taken together, *Ancestors, Artefacts, Empire* sets a new benchmark for collections research in Australia and provides an approach and conceptual framing that will be of great interest to those working at the intersection of history, museology, and Indigenous studies. More than this, though, the book helps complexify discussions about the changing value of Indigenous cultural heritage. It demonstrates how museum collections are not simply reminders of ongoing dispossession but may be used as sites of rediscovery and education. As the painting *The Queen and Me* (2016) by the Arrernte artist Vincent Namatjira on the book's cover intimates, two seemingly distant worlds, the center of British colonial rule and the local experiences of Indigenous Australia, remain thoroughly interconnected. This book successfully communicates this idea by helping us recenter Indigenous agencies while at the same time broadening out this seemingly familiar history of colonial encounter to reveal how much we are still yet to learn.

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The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Art Histories in the United States and Canada

Heather Igloliorte and Carla Taunton, eds.
New York: Routledge, 2022.

In recent years, it has become increasingly evident that Indigenous artistic expression, contemporary and historical, now constitutes a major presence in the world. In my own context of Aotearoa New Zealand, there isn't an art gallery or museum, theatre company or book publisher, school or university that does not reflect something of this new cultural reality. The same could be said of Australia and obviously other places in the world. Even in Europe, the participation of Indigenous artists in prestigious exhibitions such as documenta and the Venice Biennale, and the ramifications within European museums of the recent debate about the future (and past) of their colonial collections, suggest that Indigenous arts and artists are demanding attention as never before. None of this suggests some kind of triumph within the institutional spaces of museum and art worlds; Indigenous relationships with those worlds have long been, and continue to be, complex and difficult ones, a "struggle without end" in the words of the late Māori scholar Ranginui Walker (1990). Indeed, the significance of the Indigenous presence today—the reason it is not a trend or a fad, or the latest "zeitgeist" in the march of History—is precisely the historical depth of its continuing struggle.

An important contribution to that presence is the publication of *The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Art Histories in the United States and Canada*, edited by Inuk academic and curator Heather Igloliorte and settler-Canadian academic Carla Taunton. The book contains 36 chapters organized into five sections: Sovereignty and Futurity; Kinship, Care, Relationality; Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being; Anti-Colonial Practices; and Stories, Living Knowledges, Continuity and Resurgence. The chapters are written by Indigenous and allied authors from various professional backgrounds—museum and art gallery curators, university professors, artists of various kinds, archivists, administrators, educators, and PhD students (some contributors a combination of the above). Collectively, they constitute a powerful critique of the settler-colonial legacy of norms, practices, methodologies, and epistemological frameworks that have governed the representation

of Indigenous arts within museological, academic, and other contexts, while excluding, minimizing, or failing even to recognize the existence of what the book calls “Indigenous art histories.” Not to be confused with the academic discipline, Indigenous art histories are what the book’s contributors aim to explain, demonstrate, and insist upon as the representation of Indigenous art in Indigenous terms: embedded in Indigenous worldviews; informed by Indigenous ways of knowing and being; responsible to Indigenous communities and values of kinship, care, and relationality; and so on. They do not imply the exclusive right to representation or the implicit devaluing of other methodologies. As Igloliorte and Taunton make clear in their introduction, there are many methodologies that can do “decolonial work,” and they are welcome, but they are not what the *Routledge Companion* is about.

The value of the book is how clearly and persuasively its contributors do their job. While the sections may sound abstract, the chapters are concrete, grounded in particular tribal affiliations and identities, often personal, and focused on specific exhibitions, archival projects, curatorial roles, and interpersonal relationships. Their pedagogical value across a range of disciplines from art history and anthropology to Indigenous and Pacific Studies is timely. As an art historian, I’m excited by the book and intend to assign some of its chapters (so hard to choose) to courses I teach on Indigenous modernisms, contemporary art in the Pacific, and Art History Methodology, where I will couple them with readings by Māori and Pacific writers.

Which leads me to my one minor disappointment with the book, namely its exclusive focus on Canada and the United States. The focus is understandable of course. North America is a continent with hundreds of Indigenous nations, tribes, and peoples who share historical and present-day entanglements with those settler-colonial states. Even granting Indigenous sovereignties within them, Canada and the United States still constitute the over-arching framework within which they must operate. And no doubt limiting the book to the United States and Canada allowed a wider and deeper representation of relevant voices than would be possible if the framework was global. That much is fine. But what is missing in the book is any serious representation of the increasingly networked, trans-Indigenous, and international character of the conversation about Indigenous “art histories” today, despite some chapters that referenced the fact. But

perhaps the question is really one for the publisher. Is the present volume the first of more to follow, focused on other national contexts? Is it to stand as representative of concerns and perspectives implicitly shared more broadly? Or will future *Companions* embrace the global conversation? Whatever the case, let’s hope that this important book is not the first and last of its kind.

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Becoming Our Future: Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice

Julie Nagam, Megan Tamati-Quennell, and Carly Lane, eds.

Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2020.

The whakatauki or proverb “*ka mua, ka muri*/stepping backwards into the future,” opens and sets the tenet of this book. Rooted in multivarious Māori, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Native American contexts, *Becoming Our Future: Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice* serves as a marker and touchstone of Indigenous knowledge, art practice, revitalization, and reclamation through making, curating, and storytelling. Each exhibition, project, and artwork is presented with care and consideration. The book examines how creative expression and conversation fuels and nurtures self-determination by offering a comprehensive overview of contemporary Indigenous art that is propelling the recognition of Indigenous practice as a vessel for transformative change and a platform for social commentary.

The opening section, *Challenging Curatorial Ground*, provides an overview of exhibition conventions within its own historical context which many Indigenous curators draw inspiration from, pull apart and revisit. Jolene Rickard seeks to locate the unifying trait of Native American art practice and community building through a “duality of survival and resistance” (19). Creators and contributors are most notably GUSWENTA, a project from the Native Roots Artists Guild, who are employing art as research and as “transformational inter-

vention” (20). Rickard argues that this participatory revisitation of traditional knowledge facilitates a critical vernacular and resists suppositions harbored within institutional separatism by accounting for interpersonal and generational making in the Anthropocene. Nigel Borell from Aotearoa New Zealand looks at how two exhibitions from 2001, *Pūrangiāho: Seeing Clearly* and *Taiāwhio: Continuity and Change*, uplifted the trajectory of Māori curation within contemporary art spaces. This chapter focuses on the ways in which these exhibitions enabled a centering of whakapapa (genealogies, relationships) and identity through making in the physical gallery space. By framing works from a by-and-for Māori standpoint, *Pūrangiāho* and *Taiāwhio* reaffirmed the value of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in the canon of large-scale survey exhibitions.

In another chapter, Carly Lane discusses *Continental Drift* (2018), an exhibition featuring eight Aboriginal and seven South African artists in which experiences and narratives of settler colonialism are shared across different geographical regions. Among them, Dale Harding’s work examines the untold truths of the Hornet Bank massacre of 1857 and the brutal retaliation that resulted in the murder of 300 Aboriginal people. Similarly, Gordon Hookey’s satirical paintings dispel myths of a fair, just, and equal Australia and contribute to the essential conversation that these chapters encourage.

The next section, Indigenous Self-Determination Through Curatorial Practices, collates stories of artist intervention, structural change, and reclamation in colonially-rooted institutions. Nici Cumpston examines how the annual megafestival *Tarnanathi*, which Cumpston has curated since its inception in 2013, marks a major shift in the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. The Kaurna name for the festival pays homage to revitalization and revisioning of the future—with a sharp focus and hyper-intentional advocating of “enduring and profound listening” (90). Jarita Greyeyes, Heather Igloliorte, Jaimie Isaac, and Julie Nagam discuss their 2017 project *INSURGENCE/RESURGENCE* at Winnipeg Art Gallery, situated within an Indigenous framework. This form of decolonization celebrates what was previously silenced and sidelined by “shifting the exhibitionary infrastructural complex” (133). The project actively condemns the omnipresent and esoteric racism in art spaces that diminishes the opportunity for Indigenous scholars to work in

these institutions, and the contributors ponder possible futures for the reclamation of the white cube through a celebration of Indigeneity.

Reuben Friend, formerly the director of Pātaka Art + Museum in Porirua, observes the potential that curation holds to operate as a place for mātāwaka communities (Māori situated outside of their tūrangawaewae or ancestral homeland). The Whare Toi (art gallery) framework and rituals he describes, derived from marae ātea and whare whakairo (the carved Māori meeting house and courtyard in front of it), function alongside the display of Māori artists, and effectively redefine how audiences interact with space—despite the stasis of disassembled Māori buildings inside museums and archives, separated from their intended use as living entities. Friend acknowledges the contributions that exhibitions such as *Te Māori* (1984–7), *Choice!* (1990), and *Oho Ake* (2016) made in deconstructing this displacement of Māori culture, each respectively marking pivotal shifts in the interpretation of taonga tuku iho (treasures handed down) and Māori curation of those taonga.

In the section Weaving Curatorial Dialogues into our Collective Futures, the editors collate various chapters that engage in dialog at the intersection of creative practice and Indigenous sovereignty. Freja Carmichael writes about fiber work and female Australian artists and “how these women translate circular and spiritual relationships between past and present in their works” (173). They effectively make the point that Indigenous art-making cannot be separated from cultural existence and daily life; including weaving practice as empowerment and reclamation, shared through oral and physical storytelling. Author Lisa Myers’ extensive research into Indigenous Canadian bead-weaving, and the long-standing connections between intergenerationally-shared techniques and contemporary geometric abstraction, illustrates identity-making in Canada.

Becoming Our Future offers a compelling and necessary perspective on decolonization and indigenization of art spaces by observing the politics of inclusion and how practice (always) recovers, reconciles and revives space, place and belonging. This book is a polyphonic commentary on ongoing curatorial work that solidifies and honors the practice of Indigenous makers and artists, curators and communities, both past, present, and emerging.

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History Making a Difference: New Approaches from Aotearoa

Katie Pickles, Lyndon Fraser, Marguerite Hill, Sarah Murray, and Greg Ryan, eds.
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Readers are no doubt aware of the significant role edited collections play within historical scholarship. Not only do these works provide insight into the current state of research within a given field, but they also serve to present new ideas and innovations, such as unexplored perspectives and new methodologies, which scholars both established and emerging can consider in order to further the development of their own work. Nowhere is this more relevant than within the museum and heritage sector, an area rich with innovation and exploration of historical narratives.

History Making a Difference: New Approaches from Aotearoa is a prime example of the role such a collection can play. Consisting of 14 essays based upon papers delivered at the 2015 New Zealand Historical Association (NZHA) conference, co-editor (and then president of the NZHA) Professor Katie Pickles explains that the book, as with the conference, arose from the conditions of the Christchurch Earthquakes of 2010–11. "...185 people lost their lives, many more were injured, and every day public and private lives were forever altered," Pickles writes in the book's introduction (xii). "There was more collaboration and community awareness, and more co-production of historical knowledge. Out of adversity came the need to think harder, to be more daring and to put in extra effort ... It was this climate that led to the conference theme of History Making a Difference" (xii).

Aside from the specific conditions of historical research in post-quake Canterbury, Pickles plays with an additional issue in the introduction; history is no longer about great nation- or empire-making narratives. Instead, via co-production with the community, it is now about "making a difference" (xiv). This book focuses on Aotearoa New Zealand in particular and aims to address the issue of how historians may research history, particularly colonial and Māori history, while also contributing to the advancement of society as a whole, which involves further collaboration with historians from the UK and Australia.

As students and burgeoning historians in an ever-changing world, we are particularly aware that

most historians are setting out to "make a difference" with their work. Here, one finds the book's key interest: how historians have attempted to "make a difference," and how historians as a whole can do likewise without benefitting just a privileged few (something increasingly relevant as we continue to interrogate the domination narratives of past historical interpretations). As a class of graduate students, we read this book as part of our course work, and as a whole found ourselves impacted by it. However, we also discovered that no reviews existed, and that the book had largely gone unnoticed by the academic community. Given our admiration for the book, we set out to rectify this.

History Making a Difference examines why historians are interested in the past and how the pursuit of historical knowledge requires "making a difference." Leading and upcoming researchers, activists, and individuals working in the public sector, archives, and museums contribute their knowledge, convictions, enthusiasm, and candor to provide both valuable guidance and informed discussion. Methodological approaches used by the authors include social, cultural, Māori, oral, race relations, religious, public, political, economic, visual, and material history. Most of their interdisciplinary work, especially in postcolonial, intersectional, and cultural studies, is done with other people (both those from within the profession and from everyday walks of life). Grand stories, a focus on one's own town, and writing with great confidence and authority have given way to work that is both dynamic and rooted within its own community.

Reflecting the book's search for a diversity of perspectives, the contributors vary greatly in their expertise and experience. Among them can be found academics, museum practitioners, consultants, and research students. Between them, they cover a range of different approaches and methods, while writing about their experiences in New Zealand, the Pacific, Australia, and Britain. *History Making a Difference* pursues these histories in three sections: the first looks at "Challenging Power and Privilege;" the second concerns "The Co-production of Historical Knowledge;" and the third explores "Public and Material Histories." This review touches on each of these section themes and considers how the book fills a scholarly gap.

To both highlight the book's strengths and areas in which the contributors have made major, salient contributions to the book's themes, our review focuses on key chapters. In our analysis, each review

considers: What kind of history is being presented? How does the chapter address the key themes of the volume? Does this chapter open up new areas of research? More generally, however, we each discuss the parts of the chapter that spoke to us the most, and we also consider what is “new” about our selected chapters, the collection, and their approaches.

To begin with, Margaret Pointer’s “Niue: Bringing the History Home” is of great interest to those seeking to either convey the stories of other cultures and colonized peoples more respectfully, or inspire community engagement with local and family histories. While the actual content of the piece (the history of the Pacific Island of Niue, its people, and its place within the greater British Empire during WWI) is spellbinding, the methods Pointer implements and writes about are what makes this chapter both a standout in *History Making a Difference*, and a transformative contribution to historiography.

Pointer’s work, and indeed Chapter Four as a whole, revolves around the interplay between von Ranke-style Western historiography and the traditional oral history and storytelling methods employed by the people of Niue. The role of oral and other traditional, yet “non-academic” forms of history within academia is still debated in classroom and journal alike, but here, Pointer shows that the two can work together, complementing their strengths, and making up for their weaknesses. Pointer states: “While I was using European sources, I had as my compass the collective memory of names and events that had survived on the island and that I was often told about at village gatherings” (61). By using oral histories as a starting point for her more traditional investigation, Pointer made numerous discoveries about Niue during WWI, such as the presence of Niueans at Gallipoli, or a church service held to see off soldiers who were departing the island.

Pointer’s interaction with Niue is not one-way, either. She states that with her work now in the comment and critique phase, the need arose for “... the Niuean voice to be added” (67). Via workshops, Pointer provides the people of Niue with the skills and knowledge they need to access museum records and online databases, stoking their interest in their history, and enabling them to perform their own research. By putting the tools in their hands, she is allowing them to reinterpret and build upon her own work.

The chapter ends with Pointer recounting how New Zealand Niueans are now making the pilgrimage back to Niue in order to reconnect with their

heritage. Her methods and their impact are of great value to anyone who seeks to communicate history to the public, but for a young historian, stepping into a field where debate rages over history’s purpose, morality, and duty, “Niue: Bringing the History Home” was especially valuable. It showed not only that history can incorporate Indigenous stories without retreading colonialist narratives, but that it can also empower these communities to reinterpret, reconnect, and reclaim their past.

The theme of historical co-production is continued in Chapter Six, with particular focus upon the idea of “history from below” (96). As the chapter co-authors Paul Ward and Elizabeth Pente from the University of Huddersfield explain, the ideology, implementation, and practice of “history from below” has been a prominent area of study among UK historians since the 1960s (94, 96). For the New Zealand-based historians who experienced the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010–11, it inspired a new approach to their work, namely a deeper sense of community engagement and renewed interest in the co-production of historical knowledge, which connects to the themes explored in Chapter Six, “Let’s Change History! Community Histories and the Co-production of Historical Knowledge.”

Based on their experience, the co-production of historical research should be regarded as the study of people, and the concept of involving the “public” and the utilization of co-productive methods for historical research is crucial. Co-production is based on mutual respect, the absence of a hierarchy of knowledge forms and professional borders, as well as a flexible and porous discipline, and an emphasis on normative action rather than methodological analysis. The authors also argue that participation in historical reconstruction is in demand due to digital technologies and a culture of co-production. Using “Sound System Culture and Bhangra Renaissance” as a case study to illustrate their theories, Ward and Pente show how community projects can provide a more creative account of the past than monographs and dissertations (100–105).

Furthermore, the apparent “relevance gap” that numerous historians have observed in their field is a result of dissociation from the necessity of change (105). To address this, university-based historians have sought ways to decrease inequality through co-producing research, and thus increasing the relevance for a broader audience. Co-production also occurs in the museum space, where communities co-create exhibitions. Such collaborative interac-

tions allow for new understandings about gender, ethnicity, and local identity. For those interested in policy-level change, this chapter is informative and instructional in the way it shows that, for history to make a difference, the borders between the institution and the outside world must blur.

The themes of “history from below” and social history continue into Chapter 12. In “A Straw in the Wind: Making History with a Bonnet” by Fiona McKergow, the reader is led into a taste of the surprisingly complex colonial culture of 1860s Wellington. McKergow, who at the time was writing a PhD in museum studies at Massey University, demonstrates the multifaceted approaches that can be taken towards a textile object. Observing this integration of scholarly opinions in conjunction with examination of her footnotes, it became evident that McKergow has synthesized views from multiple vantage points. These investigations incorporate personal family histories, history of the English straw plait trade, immigrant passenger lists, births-deaths-marriages registers, and newspapers. At the same time input from multiple fields such as textile, gender, colonial, and Indigenous studies, as well as items from archaeology and museum collections, helped create a rich and detailed case study.

The case study involves a titular straw bonnet, an heirloom treasure that holds importance to one family’s genealogy, and this facet alone is of interest to the observer. Yet this is the starting point for McKergow as she builds upon this familial frame to explore the new society in which this object featured.

These observances are centered around the cultural symbolism of this object of headwear, the bonnet, that was essential dress for the English women of the time in denoting status and ensuring respectability. Moving deftly between the personal and societal meanings of such a piece of fashion, McKergow explains how this bonnet is also representative of its culture, leading the reader into an exploration of colonial development. Noteworthy in this chapter are the actions and reactions of the new immigrant culture with the existing established native culture, and the influences each had upon the other. This material cultural interaction is valuable in revealing past women within the context of their time and place, adding to the visibility of women in history. At the same time, New Zealand’s development during this time of accelerated late nineteenth-century colonization lays bare the adjustments made by recent colonial immigrants to their burgeoning society alongside examination

of the formative cultural interactions between two very different races.

McKergow’s chapter demonstrates the benefits of centering an object within historical inquiry. With the straw bonnet central, connections are revealed that may otherwise remain hidden. Add to this the cross-pollination between subject disciplines, and collaboration with non-academic contributors, and historians are freed up to move flexibly amongst the population for whom they work. McKergow breaks down barriers, allowing material culture to lead into exploration of the past, forging and opening ways to new future understandings. This new fluidity of academic boundaries loosens up categorization, altering how history is written and, as with all change, this will always be seen by some as a challenge. However, by opening space for more voices, debate will increase, and the historiographical trajectory will become more diverse.

Cohesive and poignant, *History Making a Difference* is an excellent addition to scholarship. The methods and suggestions found within its pages promise to bring about positive change, and in many instances already have. In particular, the suggestions regarding co-production of historical knowledge, either from a grassroots or more scholarly approach, struck a chord with us, with new methods of historical exploration likewise sparking our imaginations. That this collection has gone somewhat underappreciated is perhaps understandable, given the obscurity inherent in antipodean history. However, this underappreciation is exactly why this volume needed to be published—to draw attention to a changing historical landscape, one that requires the new methods and co-production philosophies found within the book in order to remain relevant. *History Making a Difference: New Approaches from Aotearoa* is more than capable of driving change within the fields of scholarship, museum studies, and everyday historical narratives alike. All it needs is the reader base.

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