Norman K. Denzin

INDIANS IN COLOR

NATIVE ART, IDENTITY, AND PERFORMANCE IN THE NEW WEST

Indians in Color

This book is a product of my ethnographic imagination. Names, characters, places, events, and incidents are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, or locales, or persons, living or dead, is at least partially coincidental. The dialogue contained herein is intended as a stage play and should not be quoted or considered to be the actual words of the speakers unless a reference citation is given.

To be an Indian in modern American society, to see yourself in Hollywood films or in paintings by Western artists or in Wild West shows is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical ... it is to be one of the vanquished, to be a person who has vanished, no longer visible.

Vine Deloria J (1969/1988, p. 2, paraphrase)

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Norman K. Denzin

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Dramatis Personæ

These characters appear throughout the plays in this book.

Adams, Kenneth Miller—artist

Alexie, Sherman—contemporary American Indian writer from Spokane/Coeur d' Alene

Allen, Mitch—cultural archaeologist and publisher

Baca, Elmo—New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer

Benjamin, Walter (1892–1940)—German philosopher and cultural critic

Berninghaus, Oscar E.— artist

Blumenschein, Ernest—artist

Brass, Ferlyn—Native performer (Key First Nation, Saskatchewan)[1] in Disneyland Paris

Brenneman, Jina—curator, Harwood Museum

Brindza, Christina C.—curator, Whitney Gallery of Western Art

Brody, J. J.—art historian

Brooka, Van Wyck (1866–1963)—American literary critic

Brooks, Mel—actor, director

Bruised Head, Tom—Native performer (Peigan Nation and Blood Nation, Alberta) in Disneyland Paris

Buffalo Bill, aka William Cody (1846–1917)—performer extraordinaire

Carson, Kit (1809–1868)—American frontiersman and Indian fighter

Couse, Eanger Irving—artist

Mr. Coyote—Navajo trickster

Ms. Coyote—Navajo trickster

de Jesus, Juan—carpenter, model

Deloria, Philip—historian, author of *Playing Indian* (1998) and *Indians in Unexpected Places* (2004)

Deloria, Vine, Jr. (Dakota Sioux)—American Indian activist, author of *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969/1988)

Denzin, Norman K., aka author

Depp, Johnny—Native performer

Durand-Ruel, Auguste—good friend of Buffalo Bill and announcer in Paris Disney Wild West shows

Dust, Kevin (Kave)—Native performer (Alexis First Nation)[1] in Disneyland Paris

Eaton, Marjorie (1901–1986)—American actress, painter and Juan Mirabal's partner

Eiteljorg, Harrison—carpenter, model

Fassnacht, Annette—art critic, Santa Fe New Mexican

Fried, Stephen—cultural historian, author of book on Fred Harvey

Giroux, Henry—American and Canadian scholar and cultural critic, and one of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States

Gorman. R. C. (1931–2005)—Navajo artist

Gover, Kevin (Pawnee/Comanche)—Director, National Museum of the American Indian

Graburn, Nelson, H. H.—anthropologist of art

Graves, Jen—author of "Maybe Don't Wear a Warbonnet to the First-ever All-Native Art Exhibit at Bumbershoot, and Don't Trip Over Custer"

Greene, Graham—Native Canadian (Oneida) actor whose film credits include *Thunderheart* (1992), *Maverick* (1994), *Winter's Tale* (2014)

Harrison, Carter—Native performer

Hassrick, Peter—art historian

Hennings, E. Martin—artist

Hewett, Edgar L. (1865–1946)—anthropologist, archaeologist, founder and first director of the Museum of New Mexico

Higgins, W. Victor—artist

Highwater, Jamake—art critic

Hogue, Alexander—Sante Fe Museum director

Hombre—Hollywood Indian

Jung, C. C.—psychoanalyst

Kovach, Margaret—scholar

Kramer, Kevin—employee of Disneyland Little Beaver

Lawrence, D. H.—novelist

Looking Elk (Martinez), Albert (1888–1940)—Native Taos artist

Luhan, Mabel Dodge—art patron

Lujan, Albert (1892–1948)—Native Taos artist

Lujan, Vernon G.—museum exhibition consultant, Native Taos artist

McBride, Henry—modernist art critic

McNenly, Linda Scarangella—anthropologist

Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Disney characters—for copyright purposes for this text, aka William and Alice Red Cloud

Minnehaha—fictional Native American woman documented in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1855 epic poem, "The Song of Hiawatha"

Mirabal, Eva (Eah-Ha-Wa)—artist

Mirabal, Juan (1903–1970)—Native Taos artist

Mustus, Kevin (Wiley)— Native performer (Alexis First Nation) in Disneyland Paris[1]

New, Lloyd Kiva (1916–2002)—Cherokee, artist, designer, co-founder (1982) of Institute of American Indian Arts

Oakley, Annie (1860–1926)—performer in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show

O'Keefe, Georgia (1887–1986)—artist

Parks, Stephen (1944–2013)—owner of Parks Gallery, Taos

Parsons, Elsie (1875-1941) anthropologist

Phillips, Bert—artist

Phillips, Ruth, Director of Museum Anthropology and Professor of Fine Art and Anthropology, University of British Columbia

Pocahontas (1595–1617)—Powhatan, aka, Amonute; later married an English Settler and was renamed Rebbecca Rolfe; became a princess in 1995 Disney film

Raheja, Michelle H.—author, *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (2010); English professor

Rangel, Ernest—Navajo recruiter and performer for Disneyland Paris[1]

Red Cloud, Anthony—fictional performer in Euro-Disney Wild West Show

Red Cloud, William and Alice—see Mickey and Minnie Mouse

Red Star, Kevin (1943–)—Crow artist

Red Star, Wendy—Crow Indian cultural archivist and performance artist who explores the experience of being a Crow Indian in contemporary society

Reeves, Tom—Euro-Disney consultant

Said, Edward (1935–2003), literary theorist

Schimmel, Julie—art historian

Scholder, Fritz (1937–2005)—Native American (one-quarter Luiseño) painter

Seventh Generation Performers (SGP), from the seventh generation principle (Iroquois)—the decisions we make today should be assessed in terms of their effects seven generations into the future

Sharp, Joseph Henry—artist

Sitting Bull (aka Tatanka-Iyotanka)—Lakota chief who led the defeat of Custer

Ghost of Sitting Bull

Secagawea (1788–?)—Lemhi Shoshone woman who accompanied the Lewis and Clark Expedition

Silverheels, Mark (1912–1980)—Mohawk, Disney performer, fictional son of Jay, who was well known for playing Tonto in the Lone Ranger radio and television series

Simpson, William H.—advertising director for the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railway

Smith, Paul Chaat—curator, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian

Suspaman, aka Christian Parish Takes the Gun—flute player, drummer, powwow dancer, hiphop artist from Crow Agency

Taylor, Bradley F.—art historian and collector

Tonto—fictional American Indian sidekick of Lone Ranger

Turner, Pauline Strong—professor of anthropology and gender studies

Ufer, Walter—artist

Vizenor, Gerald (Minnesota Chippewa)—professor, Native American writer

Wasserberger, Leslie—art historian/critic and artist

Watson, Samuel E., III.—historian of Native American art

Welch, James (1940–2003)—award-winning Native American author (Blackfoot/Gros Venre) of *Killing Custer* (1994), *Winter in the Blood* (1974), and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* (2000)

Wheelwright, Mary Cabot (1878–1958)—heiress, wealthy art patron who supported Albert Looking Elk Martinez's work

White Deer, Waylon Gary (Choctaw Nation)—professor of Choctaw Studies at Bacone College, Oklahoma; internationally known painter

Witt, David L—curator, expert on the three Taos Pueblo painters
Yellowbird, Carter—Native recruiter for Disneyland Paris[1]
Yashi, Demian Dine—artist, performer

CHAPTER ONE

Native Art, Identity and Performance in the Postmodern West

Historically, the role of the Indian artist has been primarily that of a performer, working from a script written by whites (Brody, 1971, p. 179, slight paraphrase).

It was primarily through the work of a group of 12 painters known as the Taos Society of Artists (TSA) that America began its 20th-century romance with the Southwest and its Indians (Peters, 1988, p. 1; see also Taggett and Schwarz, 1990, p. 3).[1] This romance built on an infatuation that had been established in the 19th century with the paintings of Native Americans done by George Catlin, Charles Bird King, Alfred Jacob Miller, Karl Bodmer, and John Mix Stanley.

Carter Henry Harrison (1860–1953): five-term Chicago mayor (1897–1905, 1911–1915), art patron to TSA artists, letter to Walter Ufer, member of the Taos Society of Artists:

> Walter, I can take a couple of your paintings this year. I want one of either the Santa Cruz or the Ranches of Taos Church. I would like an Indian on horseback crossing the sage brush with either mountains or a pueblo building showing in the background and painted towards dusk—no color except a suggestion of red in the horizon & turquoise blue in the upper sky.
>
> Walter, Please paint your Indians a little darker—the Chicago public does not know that the Pueblo Indians are not as dark colored as the ordinary Red Man and consequently think you off in your color. Another thing, paint in color that shows better under artificial light. Your yellows are beautiful by day, but look off at night in electric light. (Bickerstaff, 1955a, p. 142)

I've told this story before. Since an early age I have been a cultural tourist in the postmodern West. In the 1950s my brother Mark and I spent our summers, until we were young teenagers, with our grandparents on their farm south of Iowa City, Iowa. Saturday nights were special. Grandpa loved those "Cowboy and Indian" movies, and so did I. Every Saturday Grandma fixed an early supper. After supper, Grandpa and I, wearing going-to-town-clothes, drove to Iowa City to catch the first movie of a double-feature at the Strand Theatre starring John Wayne, or Glen Ford, or Henry Fonda, or Jimmy Stewart. It was a grand movie palace, Italian Renaissance style; a large canopy with yellow and red striped awnings extended from the building to the curb. Rich draperies and colorful movie posters adorned the lobby. The ceiling dome was finished in gold and silver leaf. Huge chandeliers hung from the ceiling. Grandpa and I always tried to get one of the box seats, the best seat in the house he said.

We'd time our arrival to town to allow for a stroll up and down Clinton and College Avenues, always seeing this neighbor or that neighbor, catching up on gossip, talk about rain, crops, the market price of beef or pork, whether corn would be shoulder high by the 4th. Then we'd hurry to get in line to buy our tickets to the movie.

Today, I dream myself back into those soft summer nights in cool darkness, nighttime dreams of cowboys, Indians, the cavalry, six-guns, stage coaches, barroom ladies, and school marms, and blonde-haired little boys running after a lonely rider on a horse. "Shane, Shane, Shane, come back." I still remember the names of the movies: *Stage Coach, Broken Arrow, Colt 45, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, Winchester '73, High Noon, Naked Spur, Searchers, Far Country, Bend of the River,* and *Shane*, the only film I ever watched with my father. We'd leave by 6:00 and often not get back until after 11:00, especially if we stayed for the double feature. The house would be quiet when we got back home; Grandma and Mark would be in bed. And we'd whisper and tiptoe as we came up the stairs, so as not to awaken anyone.

It was always the same movie, bad Indians, good cowboys, dead Indians, dead cowboys. The Indians always looked the same: dark brown skin, bare chests, straight black hair, bows, arrows, bareback riders on swift horses, buckskin clothing, fancy headdresses, tom toms beating in the background, tipis, woman called squaws, happy little children playing along the river bank, barking dogs in the village. Always the same movie. Always the same Indians.

I wanted to be a cowboy when I grew up. So did Mark, I think. I don't know about Grandpa. He could be anybody he wanted to be. On Saturday mornings, while Grandma made hot doughnuts for us in the new deep-fat fryer in her big country kitchen, we watched "Cowboy and Indian" television shows: "The Lone Ranger," "Red Rider and Little Beaver," "Roy Rogers and Dale Evans," "Sky King." Mark and I had cowboy outfits—wide-brimmed hats, leather vests, chaps, spurs, little pistols, and gun belts. Grandpa bought us a horse. There is a picture of Mark and me in our cowboy outfits on the back of sway-backed Sonny, the horse who was deaf in the right ear. In fourth grade I was Squanto in the Thanksgiving play about the Pilgrims. When we played cowboys and Indians, sometimes I was an Indian—Tonto, or Little Beaver.[2] Sometimes I was the Lone Ranger or Red Rider. I could be anyone

I wanted to be. And this is the point, as Philip Deloria reminds us; I could be a hobby Indian, a white boy playing Indian (1998, pp. 128–129). I had that right. I could be Squanto, or Little Beaver, or Tonto, or Red Rider, or the Lone Ranger. At a moment's notice I could appropriate an Indian identity for myself.

In 1987 my wife and I spent three weeks vacationing in Red Lodge, Montana. We've returned every year, and in 1994 bought a small cabin 60 miles from Cody, Wyoming, and the Buffalo Bill Historical Center (BBHC). The BBHC became a research site in 1995 when I started focusing on the paintings of Native artists, including Fritz Scholder (Luiseno), Kevin Red Star (Crow), R. C. Gorman (Navajo), and T. C. Cannon (Kiowa, Choctaw) in the Whitney Gallery of Western Art. At the same time I was examining the exhibits devoted to Buffalo Bill, his Wild West Show and the presence of Lakota and Oglala Sioux in his show, including Sitting Bull.

In 2011 the Indianapolis Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis became a second research site because of the attention it gave to early 20th-century Southwestern Anglo Art, especially the paintings of Indians made by the Taos Society of Artists (see Appendix B). Of special interest were the ways in which these two museums located Western Art, Anglo painters, Native Americans, and the American West on a global stage. As I looked at many of the paintings of Indians in those two museums I saw versions of the same Indians I had watched as a young child in the Strand Theatre in Iowa City. It was as if I was back in my childhood. Time stood still. Indians everywhere.

This book, part performance text, part historical ethnodrama, part autoethnography, comes out of the intersection of these childhood memories with these repeated visits to the BBHC, and the Eiteljorg.[3] Hours spent looking at Indians and cowboys. How do I name these feelings; guilt, sadness, longing? Henhawk (2013, p. 519) cuts to the chase. He says these feelings represent another one of the ironies of white privilege and white guilt. Here I am, writing my way out of a past that was handed to me by the media, Hollywood, post-World War Two American culture, my grandfather, his dreams, his fantasies, and my own life as a critic of the West. But this life has taken me to the contemporary Postmodern West and its great regional museums where Indians and their identities still live. I linger here in these spaces of memory, Wild West Shows, and museums, performing my way out of a West I do not want to be part of.

This Project: Redfacing and Three Aesthetic Moments

So I write another chapter in an undoing of the past. *Indians in Color: Native Art,*[4] *Identity and Performance in the Postmodern West* continues my critique of the treatment of Native Americans[5] in art, museums, and Wild West shows in the contemporary West. It extends the project started in my 2013 book, *Indians on Display: Global Commodification of Native Americans in Performance, Art and Museums,* namely the examination of the commodification through performance and art of Native Americans in the colonial and postcolonial west. *Indians in Color* is a study in the politics of memory, art, race and performance.

Specifically, I examine the representations of Native Americans produced in three historical moments, by three groups of artists: the European-trained Taos Society of Artists (1898–1927); the 'tourist' paintings of three Indigenous Taos Pueblo Painters, who modeled for TSA painters (1920–1950); and the so-called Chapter Three Artists[6] (1960–): Fritz Scholder, R. C. Gorman, Kevin Red Star. The Chapter Three Artists taught in, or were trained in, the Institute of American Indian Art, Santa Fe (see Appendix B). The Chapter Three painters produced a radical postmodern artistic aesthetic that challenged the romantic Noble Savage created by the TSA. I co-mingle these moments and their images with scenes from the cowboy and Indian movies of my childhood.

These three artistic formations—modern, pre-modern, postmodern[7]— offer competing versions of America's 20th- and 21st-century Native American. It is necessary to revisit the history and politics behind these three discourses. Doing so permits a critical appraisal of how Native Americans should be represented today.

Reading Race

A complex argument organizes my reading of these three artistic movements.[8] The artistic representations of Native Americans have always been about colonial privilege, about race, about dark-skinned bodies, about how white and Native artists represent the bodies of persons of color—red, dark skin, brown, black, tan. It has always been about the uses of racialized visual languages grounded in popular culture and its codes and discourses, including film, music, literature, ethnography, paintings, Wild West minstrel shows, and Indianist reenactments (Kalshoven, 2015). This is what Raheja calls "redfacing," that is, the politics of creating and preserving images of a vanishing dark-skinned Indian and Noble Savage for a white audience, a form of privileged ethnic spectatorship (2010, p. xiii). Through the middle of the 20th century this visual language of color was used by Native and non-native artists alike. The same Indian, two sets of creators (see Dunn, 1968, pp. 362–368; Hoffman, 1986).

Indeed, until the emergence of the Institute of American Indian Art (IAIA)[9] in Santa Fe in 1962, modern Indian art was art primarily produced by Native Americans for white patrons using artistic techniques taught by white instructors (Brody, 1971; Eldredge, Schimmel, and Truettner, 1986; Sims, 2008a). After 1962 a new aesthetic emerged, a post-modern, postindian[10] Indian art, a radical art that celebrated Indian identity, even as it depicted Indians as victims of an oppressive white culture (Gibson and Leaken, 2014). This new art was consumed by a new generation of celebrity patrons,[11] elevating Native artists like R. C. Gorman and Fritz Scholder to the status of pop icons, Indigenous Andy Warhols.[12]

Production Sites

This Native art, its history, production and subject-matter, is anchored in Taos, the Taos Pueblo,[13] and Santa Fe, New Mexico, the home of IAIA. It must be read through the politics operating in these sites. The interpretation of this new art must also be written through the culture and rituals of the Taos Indians. They fiercely protected their sacred rituals, and did not allow the practice of their rituals to be witnessed by Anglo artists or anthropologists (Parsons, 1936, p. 4; 1962, pp. 1–2). Hence, an idealized Taos Indian was produced by Anglo painters, an Indian who would be un-done by the new generation of Native painters trained in Santa Fe at IAIA.

The subject of this new art is explicitly political. It is radically subjective. It raises key questions:

> Whose racialized Indian is being painted?
>
> Can white artists any longer claim any right at all, contested or not, to paint Native Americans?
>
> Can the legacies of this art, which are now not so new, serve to advance an agenda of empowerment: can they function as an aesthetic pedagogy of liberation (Friere, 1992)?

These are the central questions I examine in this book.

Disneyland, Wild West Shows and Paintings of Indians

My narrative unfolds in five interconnected chapters plus this chapter.

The following quote from Ernest Blumenschein (1898), founding member of TSA, provides a segue to Chapter Two. Blumenschein's short article appeared in *Harper's Weekly* on April 30, 1898. He had attended a Buffalo Bill Wild West Show at Madison Square Garden. Before the show he mingled back stage with Indian performers. After the show he wrote:

> Bedouins are whirling and tumbling through the dust and sunshine; scene-painters are retouching the marvelous blue mountains; Mexicans and Cubans and Cowboys lazily willing away the early morning hours. A young Indian writes a letter … directed to Miss Alice Lone Bear, Pine Ridge Agency, South Dakota … I enter a large room. Several ugly-looking bucks push me around while a few old men arrange feathers in a new war bonnet … All connected with the show eat in a great room on the ground floor. Here in their working-clothes, or in the picturesque attire of their homes (for Cossack, Mexican and Indian refuse civilized costume) … After dinner is over preparations for the evening performance begin.

> With pigments, a good Indian type is made hideous in a short interval—bodies and limbs are painted half white, half green, or with circles, and crescents, and stars. The feathers come off the wall, sleigh bells jingle and tinkle, the squaws 'ti-ti' in their high shrill voices. A blast from a bugle starts them off to saddle their ponies on which they are soon mounted for the grand entry. The cowboy band starts up 'Hail, Columbia,' the bugle sounds again, the great canvas curtain is drawn, and the howling warriors dash wildly into the pubic gaze.[14]

Blumenschein would soon gravitate from writing short articles about Wild West shows to illustrating Indian stories by Stephen Crane and Hamlin Garland for *McClure's Magazine* and *Harper's Weekly* (Cunningham, 2008, pp. 26–27).[15] Sadly, the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show he described in 1898 is still going on in Paris in 2014.

Blumenschein's observations of Native Americans in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show perfectly illustrates Raheja's (2010) arguments concerning "redfacing" and the intersection of art and performance in 20th- and 21st-century America:

> Stemming from a long tradition of staged performances such as The Wild West shows that were themselves informed by American Literature's obsession with Native American plots and subplots, film and visual culture [art] have provided the primary representational field on which Native American images have been displayed to dominant culture audiences in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These representations have also been key to formulating Indigenous people's own self images.[16]

From the 19th century forward, the Wild West show, with its alignments with visual culture—advertising, art and painting, film—was the cultural engine that reproduced redfacing for American popular culture.

Chapter Two, "Disneyland Indians, Paris, circa 2014," starts with Graham Greene on a YouTube video reading the call for Native performers to audition for the Disneyland Buffalo Bill Wild West Show in Paris. Scenes of poverty from the Pine Ridge Reservation appear on the screen. It seems that when we talk about Native Americans, art, painters, and the West, we can never get too far from Buffalo Bill and his minstrel show. Disneyland lurks in the background (see Giroux and Pollock, 2010). Like in this recent advertisement.

> **Disneyland Paris Seeks New Recruits for Wild West Show, April 2014**
>
> Disneyland Paris is auditioning locally for Cowboys and Indians with exceptional horsemanship skills for the facility's new musical extravaganza, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show ... with Mickey[17] and Friends. The western-themed spectacle, which still features Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull, Annie Oakley, and a multitude of Cowboys and Indians, replaced the long running original production on April 4th last year at the grand premiere in Paris, France. This time around, Sheriff Mickey and a cast of Disney's beloved characters have joined the adventure.[18]

Wendy Red Star, Crow Indian cultural activist and performance artist, offers an alternative view, focusing on performances and artworks that contest images of the vanishing dark-skinned Indian.

> I've created my own version of a Wild West Show. I call it *Wendy Star's Wild West & Congress of Rough Riders of the World*.[19] It will be held in the Fisher Pavilion, Seattle, August 30–September 1, 2014. My show combines performance, and art. I have Indian artists, painters, fancy dancers. I tell the story of the West from the Indian's point of view. We re-enact the Battle of Little Big Horn. Our show and artists challenge the representations of the west currently being staged by Wild West Paris Disneyland. It's time to stop this Disneyland travesty, even if Disney does hire Native Americans as performers.

This four-act historical ethnodrama critiques Paris Disneyland, the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show and its use of Native Americans as re-enactors of a Wild West that never was.[20] Drawing on Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921/1998a), the play uses the voices of Native Americans drawn from popular culture—Tonto, Pocahontas, Little Beaver, Minnehaha, Secagawea, Hombre. These characters are Indigenous activists, and they are asking for an author who will