HOT TOPICS CAFÉ

YOU ARE ON INDIAN LAND

Tuesday, February 9, 2016
12 - 1:30 p.m.
Museum of Northern Arizona
Facilitated by Daisy Purdy, NAU, University College, Native American Student Services
PROGRAM

12 p.m. Welcome and Introduction
Andrea Houchard, Director, Philosophy in the Public Interest

12:15 p.m. Community Dialogue
Daisy Purdy, NAU, University College, Native American Student Services

1) Question 1: Why is the term “Indian” contestable?

2) Question 2: Who is on Indian land?

3) Question 3: How do we conceptualize land “ownership”? On what authority?

Full Circle Questions
Artist Statements

1:20 p.m. Closing Questions and Recap of Discussion

This informational handout was researched and written by Daisy Purdy, NAU, University College, Native American Student Services, designed by Kaitlin Baker, Philosophy in the Public Interest, Visual Communications Major

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS, SUPPORTERS AND VENUE HOSTS!
Why is the term “Indian” contestable?

The genesis of the term “You Are On Indian Land” dates back to the 1969 documentary about Akwesane resistance to the inability to cross-ancestral lands without documentation. The film was created by two Canadian and American anglos at a time of revolt. A more nuanced understanding of most Indigenous viewpoints would suggest the notion that land is not owned rather than cared for. The majority of our present-day population, American Indian and others alike, are from outside this ancestral-Pueblo (in Hopi, the oldest inhabitants of this “Indian Land”: HisatSinom). The museum exhibit uses the phrase in association with the American Indian Movement’s occupation of Alcatraz during the Civil Rights Era. The show, like the doctrine of discovery, appears to have moved westward from New York, to the Institute of American Indian Art prior to arriving at The Museum of Northern Arizona.

The historic use of the phrase “You are on Indian land” is not to suggest that it doesn’t hold contemporary relevance, quite the opposite especially with consideration to its associated legacy with activism and the continuation of land rights issues pertaining to Native America. This discussion will not approach the statement “You are on Indian Land” as true or false, but instead explore conceptualization of land “ownership” from mainstream and Indigenous perspectives while taking into consideration a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the history of US privatization of land and contemporary land rights in a way that intends to debunk national myths that privilege a single dominant perspective.
Who is on Indian land?

Influential Documents and Legal Proceedings regarding “Indian Land”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENT</th>
<th>BACKGROUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine of Discovery</td>
<td>Arguably dating back to the fourth century, the Doctrine of Discovery claims that by virtue of religious and citizenry inclusion “discoverers” have legal right to any foreign lands they encounter that are unoccupied or occupied by populations that do not have the same religious and citizenry membership as the “discoverers.” This international law decreed Christian Europeans legally entitled to land rights in the United States solidified with the famous historic court case <em>Johnson v. M’Intosh</em> (1823) giving Indians limited rights of occupancy. This perception of international law was successively upheld by the US Supreme Court and used as a precedent for invalidating the rights of Indigenous people to inhabit ancestral lands as recently as 2005 with <em>City of Sherill v. Oneida Nation of Indians</em> when the court ruled against the Oneida Nation’s sovereign land claim based on an interval of no occupancy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTION 3

How do we conceptualize land “ownership”? On what authority?
**Manifest Destiny**

Appearing in print for the first time in 1845, this term depicts the idea that colonial settlers are divinely destined to “civilize” the sublime Wilderness of the American west, both its lands and its original peoples. This notion is commonly depicted in artistic renderings romanticizing western industrious ideals, such as in the famous 1872 painting by John Gast titled “American Progress.”

*John Gast, American Progress, 1872*

*see page 6 for maps of Tribal Lands in the United States.*
Aboriginal Title

Ancestral claims to Native land that is not held in federal trust based on continuity of occupancy.

Full Circle Questions

For whose benefit? At whose expense?
Where do we go from here?
Tribal Lands in the United States

Arizona Tribal Lands
Tamara Ann Burgh

Tamara is interested in challenging beliefs and mythologies that seem irrelevant or dysfunctional for the 21st century. She explores gnostic mysticism, symbolism, consciousness, archetypes and more with the intention of creating new mythologies that might address and yet transcend modern life. Tamara is a multi-disciplinary artist. For her, the medium follows and supports the idea; the idea is developed in bodies of work.

Nicholas Galanin

Culture cannot be contained as it unfolds. My art enters this stream at many different points, looking backwards, looking forwards, generating its own sound and motion. I am inspired by generations of Tlingit and Unangax creativity and contribute to this wealthy conversation through active curiosity. There is no room in this exploration for the tired prescriptions of the "Indian Art World" and its institutions. Through creating I assert my freedom. Concepts drive my medium. I draw upon a wide range of indigenous technologies and global materials when exploring an idea. Adaptation and resistance, lies and exaggeration, dreams, memories and poetic views of daily life--these themes recur in my work, taking form through sound, texture, and image. Inert objects spring back to life; kitsch is reclaimed as cultural renewal; dancers merge ritual and rap. I am most comfortable not knowing what form my next idea will take, a boundless creative path of concept-based motion.

Cannupa Hanska Luger

Poet Bob Kaufman wrote, “…Creation is Perfect…” This phrase has been a lighthouse, a ladder, and a lifeboat in those awkward moments of uncertainty found between unwrapping a block of clay and expressing a cohesive idea. It has been a beacon to illuminate the darkness of irrational fears. A reverie that does not vouch for the product but, more importantly, the action. The process of creation is perfect and beyond that moment all things exist in a state of entropy. There seems to be a harmony between creation and destruction, one defines the other. A block of clay is destroyed to create a sculpture. It is then subjected to extreme heat, which transforms it to something fragile, that on a timeline difficult to perceive, will eventually breakdown and return it to the earth. This is not a duality and should not be perceived as linear. It is more cyclical, like the ebb and flow of tides. This is the creative process in which the artist and the form/concept can meet somewhere in the middle. Sometimes it comes easy, and sometimes it is a long and arduous struggle to achieve. The creation is made out of every experience in an entire life up until this moment, and clay. Every piece continues to take a lifetime to create, so that life itself is a material. And so, art should represent this moment in time, an interpretation of right now. What is created is an attempt to be as honest as possible. Truth is static and fragile. Honesty and sincerity has plasticity.

Ed Kabotis

My vision as an artist is to express the values, virtues, and sometimes vices of my people through the mediums of art and music.

Michael Namingha

Michael Namingha is a visual artist with a spare contemporary aesthetic. A keen observer of today’s society, he creates a compelling mix of imagery and words commenting on modern interpersonal relations and popular culture. His ability to distill everyday conversational statements results in work that surprises and engages the viewer.

Postcommodity

Postcommodity works to forge new metaphors capable of rationalizing our shared experiences within this increasingly challenging contemporary environment; promote a constructive discourse that challenges the social, political and economic processes that are destabilizing communities and geographies; and connect Indigenous narratives of cultural self-determination with the broader public sphere.

Steven J. Yazzie

My work is the product of interdisciplinary projects and multidisciplinary activities including: painting, video installation, performance, and socially driven collaborations. My ancestry, Navajo (Dine’), Laguna, and European, play a fundamental role in the postcolonial subtext embedded in the narratives of my work. I use specific geographies within the southwest region of the United States as points of reference in framing metaphors of cultural condition, specifically land as a source of identity, conflict, and explicit resource.
NOTES:

SOURCES:

http://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/item.php?item_id=180
http://nationalmap.gov/small_scale/printable/fedlands.html
http://www3.epa.gov/region9/air/maps/az_tribe.html

NAU’s Philosophy in the Public Interest is non partisan and does not endorse any position with respect to the issues we discuss. Philosophy in the Public Interest is a convener for civil discourse.

Contact us: 928-523-8339 | nau.ppi@nau.edu | nau.edu/ppi