

# **Annotating Colonialism: Recent Exhibit Interventions in Historic Cultural (Mis)Representation at the American Museum of Natural History**

**Leonie Treier<sup>1</sup>**

Bard Graduate Center

138 West 86th Street

New York, NY 10024

United States

leonie.treier@bgc.bard.edu

This editorially reviewed review essay was accepted for publication on March 26, 2021.

## **Abstract**

This exhibition review essay compares three recent interventions into historic cultural representations at the American Museum of Natural History: the Digital Totem that was placed in the Northwest Coast Hall in 2016 to partially modernize its content, the 2018 reconsideration of the Old New York Diorama, which attempts to correct its stereotypical representations of Native North American peoples, and the 2019 exhibition *Addressing the Statue* providing context for the Theodore Roosevelt statue. Paying attention to visual and textual strategies, I characterize these three interventions as temporary annotations to what have been remarkably static, long-term cultural representations. I argue that, through these annotations, the museum acknowledges the misrepresentations but does not resolve them. The case studies show varying degrees of critical historical reflection expressing the complexities of negotiating different approaches and agendas to engaging with the museum's past. I also comment on the pervasiveness of a digital aesthetics in all three projects, even though only the Digital Totem was produced as a digital, interactive intervention into the museum space. The invocation of a digital design vocabulary enhances the impression of annotation.

## **Keywords**

anthropological museums; museum exhibitions; protest; social change; social history; stereotyping

## **Competing Interests**

The author declares no competing interests.

## **License**

Creative Commons CC BY–NC–SA 4.0

**Museum Anthropology Review**

Volume 15.1 (Spring 2021), pp 84–105

eISSN 1938–5145

<https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/mar>

Copyright © Leonie Treier 2021. All rights reserved.

For editorial inquiries, e-mail: [mar1@indiana.edu](mailto:mar1@indiana.edu)

# Annotating Colonialism: Recent Exhibit Interventions in Historic Cultural (Mis)Representation at the American Museum of Natural History

Leonie Treier

Bard Graduate Center

**Abstract:** This exhibition review essay compares three recent interventions into historic cultural representations at the American Museum of Natural History: the Digital Totem that was placed in the Northwest Coast Hall in 2016 to partially modernize its content, the 2018 reconsideration of the Old New York Diorama, which attempts to correct its stereotypical representations of Native North American peoples, and the 2019 exhibition Addressing the Statue providing context for the Theodore Roosevelt statue. Paying attention to visual and textual strategies, I characterize these three interventions as temporary annotations to what have been remarkably static, long-term cultural representations. I argue that, through these annotations, the museum acknowledges the misrepresentations but does not resolve them. The case studies show varying degrees of critical historical reflection expressing the complexities of negotiating different approaches and agendas to engaging with the museum's past. I also comment on the pervasiveness of a digital aesthetics in all three projects, even though only the Digital Totem was produced as a digital, interactive intervention into the museum space. The invocation of a digital design vocabulary enhances the impression of annotation.

[Keywords: anthropological museums; museum exhibitions; protest; social change; social history; stereotyping.]

In 2002, museum scholar Timothy Luke wrote that the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City had been “an essentially uncontested site” in the American public’s culture wars of the preceding decade (2002, 101). Today, the AMNH and its displays can hardly be described as uncontested: since 2016, the New York City-based activist group Decolonize This Place (DTP) has staged annual protests at the AMNH on Columbus Day, calling on the museum to “Respect, Remove, Rename” (Decolonize This Place 2016). The protesters have demanded the museum address its outdated representations of non-Western peoples in its cultural halls, repatriate more cultural belongings to home communities, and respect the United States’ Indigenous population by acknowledging that New York City and its institutions are located on Lenape territory. Furthermore, the group has demanded the removal of the equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt outside of the museum’s main entrance for embodying racial hierarchies and, thereby, perpetuating views of white supremacy. The statue, which was created by James Earle Fraser and dedicated in 1940, depicts the former president riding on a horse in hunting gear, flanked on foot

by two gun-bearers: a Plains Indian in a feathered headdress and an African figure wearing only a cloth draped over one shoulder. Both figures are stereotypical representations. Lastly, DTP has requested the reconceptualization of Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples Day, one step in a broader movement to revise and correct dominant historical narratives wherein American history begins with Columbus' arrival, erasing historic Indigenous presence and ignoring the ongoing exploitation and oppression which his arrival introduced.

Despite the persistent criticism of (mis)representations of non-Western peoples in its permanent cultural halls, which date from the early twentieth century through the 1980s, the AMNH has paid less attention to updating them in accordance with new trends in anthropology and museology, while consistently reviewing its natural history halls to accurately display new scientific discoveries. In 2017, the museum announced the planned renovation of its Northwest Coast Hall, which was originally conceived by Franz Boas in the early twentieth century (American Museum of Natural History 2017). The restoration aims "to refresh and enrich the historic gallery, update interpretations, and represent the living cultures and traditions" (American Museum of Natural History 2019, 4). It represents the first large-scale reconceptualization of the AMNH's permanent cultural displays since the Hall of South American Peoples opened in 1989 (American Museum of Natural History 1989, 4). The museum has been pointing to the renovation and the curatorial participation of Northwest Coast community members, as part of a campaign to demonstrate that the institution is responding to the kinds of demands brought forth by DTP and others (American Museum of Natural History 2017, 1; 2018; 2019, 4). The opening of the Northwest Coast Hall after renovation in spring 2022 is widely anticipated. In this, as well as in response to other recent projects, the museum is under close scrutiny by scholars, media, and activists.

I take this moment prior to the reopening of the Northwest Coast Hall to compare three recent, smaller-scale interventions into the historic cultural representations at the museum, and to analyze how they respond to scholarly and activist demands to address outdated representations and the institution's settler colonial legacies. I will consider the Digital Totem that was placed in the Northwest Coast Hall to partially modernize its contextualization in 2016 prior to its closing;<sup>1</sup> the 2018 re-consideration of the "Old New York" Diorama in the Roosevelt Memorial Hall, which attempts to correct its stereotypical representations of Native peoples;<sup>2</sup> and the 2019 temporary exhibition *Addressing the Statue*, which responds to a Mayoral recommendation to provide context for the Theodore Roosevelt statue.<sup>3</sup>

In this exhibition review essay, I characterize these three interventions as temporary *annotations* to what have been remarkably static, long-term cultural representations. Annotations are comments or explanations to a given text. They often take the form of footnotes or marginal text boxes and are considered supplemental, or non-essential, to the main (often "original") text: the reader is able to understand the key message of the text without referring to the annotations but can consult them for additional, contextual information. At the AMNH, the character of annotation is enhanced by the interventions' focus on textual, instead of visual (image-based), supplementation. I also comment on the pervasiveness of a digital aesthetics in all three projects, even though only the Digital Totem was produced as a digital, interactive intervention into the museum space. The invocation of a digital design vocabulary enhances the impression of annotation further. I argue that, through these annotations, the museum acknowledges the misrepresentations in its visual displays but does not

resolve them: commentary without resolution. All three interventions are dependent on the visitors' openness to engage more deeply, critically, and textually with what they are presented with at first sight, transferring interpretive responsibility and giving visitors the chance to opt out of critical reflection.

My insights derive from my experiences as a recurrent visitor to the AMNH trained in museum anthropology. I rely on museological analysis rather than ethnographic interviews or behind-the-scenes observations to comment on final, publicly accessible curatorial and design choices and not the process of their making. I am aware of the complex legacies and critiques of "reading" exhibitions and wish not to replicate them (i.e. Schudson 1997). I acknowledge the underlying institutional, organizational, and historical dynamics and complexities of the production of these exhibition interventions, and I attempt to be mindful of them by avoiding sweeping generalizations, assigning clear agency where possible, and reviewing and comparing multiple displays that have occurred over the last five years. My aim for this comparative exhibition review essay is not to write an ethnography of these projects—which would be valuable to the field in its own right—but to think through how the three projects utilize and communicate through similar exhibitionary strategies. To support my analyses, I also draw on scholarly and popular writings about AMNH as well as the museum's own publications on its website. All three interventions were developed by the Exhibition Department at AMNH with varying degrees of involvement by the Division of Anthropology, Education Department, and museum administration. The exact makeup of the development teams and assigned roles is sometimes difficult to identify from the outside (except for the Digital Totem, which provided a long list of credits). Throughout the essay I refer to "the museum" when I was unable to identify the particular agents of decision making.

I build on two essays co-authored by Emily Martin and Susan Harding (Harding and Martin 2016; Martin and Harding 2017). Published prior to the reconsideration of the diorama and the exhibition about the statue, their critiques and contextual information are useful to get a sense of the institutional climate in which these interventions occurred. Martin and Harding reported that staff members of the AMNH's Division of Anthropology have long been aware of misrepresentations and desired updates and renovations to the cultural halls (Martin and Harding 2017, 8). Primarily using observations and interviews as source material, Harding and Martin reasoned that the AMNH's administration was restricting curatorial efforts to update cultural representations due to an unwillingness to critically engage with the museum's history. In particular, they cited neoliberal approaches to funding decisions, in which updates to cultural displays do not seem to meet a cost-benefit analysis (Martin and Harding 2017, 11). Martin and Harding further discussed how staff members of the anthropology division have responded to these constraints by focusing their attention on the transformation of aspects of museum work less visible to the public, like collaborations with home communities, repatriation, accessibility of collections through online databases, archives, publication of academic papers, and online and a few travelling exhibitions (Martin and Harding 2017, 7–9). However, few of these efforts—with the exception of temporary displays—have been made visible to the museum's public or fed back into permanent displays of the cultural halls. Only recently have some such initiatives been featured more prominently on the museum's webpages.<sup>4</sup> This seems to reveal differing approaches between the larger administration, departments, and individual staff members. Building on Harding and Martin's work, I argue that these three case studies show varying degrees of critical historical reflection and decolonial engagement, expressing the complexities of negotiating different (some-

times contradictory) approaches and agendas to engaging with the museum's past taken by different actors and departments in the institution and their delivery to the public. In this, I follow Amy Lonetree's conceptualization of decolonization as based on collaboration and shared authority between museums and home communities and the necessity of speaking the hard truths about colonial histories and their lasting impacts (Lonetree 2012), while keeping in mind critiques of the overuse and misconception of decolonization narratives, which transform the word and project into empty metaphors without being necessarily unsettling (Tuck and Yang 2012). Paying close attention to these three exhibition interventions, their specific strategies, and timing at this albeit famous and highly scrutinized museum opens up larger questions about how museums respond to changing public political pressure.

## Museum Anthropological Context

With growing post-colonial awareness in the 1980s, scholars turned their attention to museums, critiquing their historical, political, and moral entanglements with (settler) colonialism and their roles in perpetuating dominant accounts of history, race, and gender (i.e. Ames 1992; Bal 1996; Clifford 1988; Haraway 1984; Hinsley 1994; Karp and Lavine 1991; Luke 2002; Phillips and Steiner 1999; Price 1989; Stocking 1985; Vogel 1988). Since then, the AMNH has been a recurring locus of scholarly analysis, even if, as Luke claimed, it has remained relatively free from public protests until recently. Donna Haraway, in her essay *Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936*, read the dioramas populating the museum's halls as “meaning-machines” exhibiting dominant, white, male, American ideological convictions in regard to questions of race, gender, class, and nature as if they were “fact” (Haraway 1984, 52). Focusing her attention on the interplay of visual and verbal representations in the social and semiotic construction of museum “fictions,” Mieke Bal analyzed how displays in the AMNH produced a “rhetoric of persuasion that almost inevitably convinces the viewer of the superiority of Anglo-Saxon, largely Christian culture” (Bal 1996, 53). She argued that “at the end of the evolutionary ladder, a pervasive speaking ‘I’ is itself absent from the content of the shows [...]. Showing, if it refrains from telling its own story, becomes showing off” (Bal 1996, 53). Both scholars have added to the critical discourse of museums and their alignment with dominant Euro-American ideology expressed in, for instance, “the tendency of collections to be self-sufficient, to suppress their own historical, economic, and political processes of production” (Clifford 1988, 229).<sup>5</sup>

Contemporary museums are products of and actors in the colonial system. They are deeply entangled in larger colonial structures, the dynamics of which get replicated internally through their practices of collecting, preserving, and displaying non-Western people and objects. Recent theories of decolonization have addressed the essentialising discourses that assume universal validity of Western knowledge (including those presented in museums) by demonstrating that they are only valid within Western epistemology. Scholars of Indigenous and non-Western ancestry, like Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Walter Mignolo, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, and Eve Tuck have made this underlying, self-sustaining, ongoing colonial system transparent, and have demonstrated the legitimacy of ways of thinking and knowledges outside of a Western, modernist framework that are grounded in ontologies and epistemologies of formerly colonized peoples (e.g. Mignolo 2000; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o 2008; Smith [1999] 2012).

Museums represent theoretical and practical sites of decolonization. Essential questions that Smith raises in *Decolonizing Methodologies* are “whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it?” (Smith [1999] 2012, 10). As institutions of research, this applies to museums as well. Ho-Chunk scholar Amy Lonetree (2012) has argued that to decolonize museums and to develop institutions in service of Native communities, authority must be shared and hard truths about colonial injustices must be addressed. Many museums have long engaged in various “decolonial” moves, such as co-curation, collaboration and consultation, changing protocols for conservation, and repatriation. However, Lonetree also cautions that “collaboration and the inclusion of Native voices in all aspects of museum practice reflect the most important new direction in the last thirty-plus years of our relationships to mainstream museums. But these changes alone are not decolonization” (Lonetree 2012, 121). Decolonial efforts, often, demand the return of land (and belongings) to their original owners as essential step to unsettle and reverse power structures. Tuck and Yang (2012) emphasize this necessarily *unsettling* nature of decolonization in dismantling and eroding Western systems of thought and power as manifested in, amongst others, concepts of property. Tuck and Yang warn of the danger of settlers appropriating decolonization narratives to reduce feelings of guilt but, thereby, turning the project into a metaphor to maintain control of the discourse.

## The Digital Totem

In 1985 in his afterword to *Objects and Others*, James Clifford reported the rumor that the AMNH was going to renovate and modernize its Northwest Coast Hall. He reported that “apparently (or so one hopes) the plan ha[d] been abandoned. For this beautiful, dated, hall reveals not merely a superb collection, but a moment in the history of collecting” (Clifford 1985, 245). This quote demonstrates the long-standing and contested question around the renovation of this hall and updating of historic displays more broadly. Thirty years later, in 2016, the museum installed the Digital Totem in its Northwest Coast Hall to update—through a kind of digital annotation—the content of the outdated exhibition, which had placed the peoples it represented in the past and had only undergone “cosmetic” changes since the early twentieth century (Jacknis 2004, 242). The interactive station (Figure 1) was part of a larger set of digital initiatives in the hall and can be considered a cost-effective pilot project for the hall’s large-scale renovation announced in 2017. Since the hall’s closure for renovation, content from the Digital Totem was migrated to several AMNH webpages and can no longer be experienced in its original layout and interface.<sup>6</sup> Building on intensive research and in dialogue with originating community members, the team behind the Digital Totem aimed “to bring contemporary Northwest Coast voices and new interpretation into this historic gallery with a touch-screen portal to the peoples, places, and sounds of the Pacific Northwest” (“Digital Totem | AMNH” n.d.). The Digital Totem consisted of a large vertically mounted interactive screen embedded in a monolith-like construction framed by Northwest Coast Chilkat blanket design motifs. Visitors could navigate content through an interactive map or other interfaces organized along themes such as Northwest Coast People, Made in the Northwest Coast, and Northwest Coast Sounds.

Many elements of the Digital Totem responded to recent shifts in museology demanding collaboration with home communities, the revision of timeless, frozen representations of non-Western peoples, transparency of collection and display



Figure 1. The Digital Totem in the Northwest Coast Hall. Photograph by D. Finnin/©AMNH

histories, and questions of repatriation. The interactive map and Northwest Coast People section highlighted contemporary Native life through interviews with individuals and photographs of communities today.<sup>7</sup> The Digital Totem also addressed the histories of anthropological collecting and dispossession of land, topics that have otherwise remained largely absent from the museum's displays, publications, and statements.<sup>8</sup> Even issues of repatriation, which the museum usually refrains from making public, were discussed in several places—admittedly not easily found, but accessible if one clicked through the different screens long enough. Doing important educational work, the kiosk corrected antiquated Euro-American classifications and terminologies that were still present in the hall, for instance in the naming of cultural groups. It also addressed and countered the salvage anthropological framework that assumed the demise and disappearance of “authentic” Native culture, which had guided Boas's and others' work, by representing the survivance and vibrancy of contemporary Native life. Without physically interrupting the historic hall's structure or content, the Digital Totem emphasized its outdated character and acted as an annotation to it, revealing issues that team members placed importance on in their work. The Digital Totem also featured a credit page listing everyone involved in its development, including consultants. This represents a conscious effort toward greater transparency in exhibitions.

In a thematic section on the hall itself, visitors could click through historical photographs to compare various iterations of the hall's design. Brief texts explained underlying ideological frameworks for late nineteenth and early twentieth century museum displays, from social evolutionism, represented by an image of the Smithsonian National Museum's Boat Hall, to cultural relativism at the AMNH.<sup>9</sup> By addressing this history and describing Boas's influence and intellectual contribution to anthropology and museology, the Digital Totem provided meta-commentary on, and contextualization of, the hall, including some aesthetic changes made over the last century. Of the

three interventions discussed here, the Digital Totem was the only one that explicitly and reflexively addressed the historical formation of the AMNH's displays. This represents a self-conscious acknowledgement that the installations in the hall were the result of disciplinary and ideological convictions rather than self-sufficient, authorless representations of an independent truth, subtly nodding to Haraway's and Bal's analyses.

However, the Digital Totem missed out on an opportunity to more directly confront public misconceptions of Northwest Coast cultures and carvings. The graphic design and content of the kiosk visually aligned with the objects displayed in the hall. Similar to the heraldic poles displaying family crest, lineage histories, and memorable events, the Digital Totem told histories of places and people. However, naming the kiosk a "Digital Totem" can be considered problematic. The term *totem* itself is not appropriate for Northwest Coast cultures. It is an Algonkian concept that was applied to Northwest Coast cultures by outsiders and has since circulated, leading to house posts and commemorative poles being colloquially referred to as totem poles (Jonaitis and Glass 2010, 5). The use of this name for this project reinforces this misconception.

Under "Made on the Northwest Coast," visitors were able to learn more about, zoom in on, and rotate some thirty Northwest Coast objects on display in the hall or in museum storage. Haidy Geismar describes the resulting effect of this feature as unintentionally reinforcing the outdated character of the permanent hall by "render[ing] the collections that are scanned, augmented and socially framed more colourful, brighter, more tactile and more accessible than the same objects that lie still, either in their cases, hidden away with low lighting, or in the museum storerooms barely accessible to the public. These digital interventions seem to transform, improve, correct, enliven" (2018, 21). Another animating effect was introduced by "Northwest Coast Sounds," which allowed visitors to "create their own Northwest Coast soundscapes with recordings of natural features, animals, and local instruments" as the accompanying website specifies ("Digital Totem | AMNH" n.d.). These would play upon touching respective symbols on the screen and could be overlaid on top of each other. The AMNH and other natural history museums have long been critiqued for placing non-Western peoples in galleries adjacent to animals and natural phenomena suggesting their closeness to nature rather than culture (i.e. Bal 1996, 15). Despite a few audio recordings of drumming and rattling, the vast majority consisted of environmental and animal sounds, which reinforced the museum effect of placing Native communities in the past and nature, thereby undermining and contradicting many of the Digital Totem's successful strategies to revisit the historic representations of Native communities. To the museum, the Digital Totem presented a discrete opportunity to respond to critiques of cultural representation at the AMNH that was far less costly than a comprehensive overhaul of the hall. However, the kiosk, with its character of acknowledging and correcting problems rather than rethinking displays, remained a supplementary content delivery tool. While the Digital Totem used several effective strategies of addressing the inadequacies of the representations of Indigenous peoples from the Northwest Coast, its character remained that of an annotation, somewhat separate from the hall itself. This annotation effect was reinforced by the station's digital nature, which emphasized the outdatedness of a hall conceptualized long before such technology existed, and museums began to pay closer attention to the interactivity of displays. As with an annotation, the visitor had to divert from the main text—the historic hall—to gain important contextualizing information and current perspective.



# The Old New York Diorama

In 2018, the AMNH, working with visual historian Bradley Pecore (Menominee/ Stockbridge-Munsee), intervened in its problematic 1939 Old New York Diorama (Figure 2). The diorama imagines a diplomatic encounter between Lenape people and Dutch settlers in 1660 using a settler-historical narrative that relies on the contrast between “civilized” Dutch settlers and “primitive” Lenape Indians. This contrast is signified through dress and other material culture, gesture, and built environment. A panel next to the diorama asks “Why is this diorama here?” The text explains that the diorama was originally installed in the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall, which is part of New York City’s official memorial to Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), consisting of the museum’s Central Park West entrance, the Theodore Roosevelt Rotunda, and the hall all built between 1929 and 1935, to honor the former New York governor and U.S. president’s Dutch ancestry.

While the Digital Totem featured a credit page, the museum only reveals Pecore’s involvement online, in a video in which he discusses his role in the project.<sup>10</sup> The video also features Lauri Halderman, Vice President for Exhibition, and Peter Whiteley, a curator in the Division of Anthropology, contextualizing the diorama and the intervention. Their specific role in the project remains unaddressed. The video lists several AMNH employees in the “special thanks” by name without specifying their positions and role in the project. It is unclear if they were participants in the larger intervention or primarily contributors to the video.

Museum scholar Silje Opdahl Mathisen writes that “dioramas tell as much about the society that created them as they do about the natural worlds they represent. Dioramas as an exhibition technology are not ‘neutral’ [n]or innocent, but latent political



Figure 2. The Reconsideration of the Old New York Diorama. Photograph by R. Mickens/©AMNH

statements” (Mathisen 2017, 66). The reexamination of the AMNH diorama focused on correcting misrepresentations. This strategy does not only provide insight into American society and museum politics in the 1930s. It also reveals a lot about the workings of contemporary society, the growing demands for museums to revisit their representations, and the AMNH’s institutional approach to such demands.

Instead of dismantling the diorama, which would have erased the history of this museum exhibit, the AMNH decided to insert annotations that attempt to engage with the scene and start a conversation about it.<sup>11</sup> As Whiteley, who is the museum’s Curator of North American Ethnology, stressed in a video posted on the intervention’s webpage:

unless you introduce different kinds of information, you’re only going to end up reproducing stereotypical representations of the Native people who are present. You definitely want people to have an awareness of past depictions. We don’t want to forget that because otherwise we forget a history of oppression. And until we’re prepared to recognize that, the possibility for genuine reconciliation is not going to be there.<sup>12</sup>

The annotations take the form of text labels on the glass case surrounding the diorama that enrich the context and highlight misrepresentations, such as Native dress and the role of Lenape women, or aspects that are missing, like the presence of settler women, other immigrant groups, slaves, and free African Americans. Similarly to the Digital Totem, to make visitors aware of contemporary Native presence in New York and the US, the development team and Pecore developed an interpretive panel titled “The Lenape people, then and now.” Placed next to the diorama, the label examines the history of the Lenape, their forced removal and dispersal across North America, and their survival and resurgence today. Placed below the diorama, embedded in a label titled “Colonialism and cultural representation,” the museum acknowledges its own and the city’s location on Lenape lands. Searching the AMNH’s entrances and exhibition halls for additional, more visually prominent plaques in recognition of this fact, this label seems to represent the only land acknowledgement in the museum. This discrepancy might reveal diverging sensibilities and strategies within the larger institution on how to address the museum’s history and how some departments and individual actors push for the adoption of more progressive practices.

In the main label on the glass case, the intervention acknowledges that the diorama “offers only stereotypical representations and ignores how complex and violent colonization was for Native people.” Here, the museum appears to call for critical engagement with the consequences of settler colonialism, which is an aim aligned with Lonetree’s insistence that decolonization requires speaking hard truths about colonial histories and their lasting impacts. However, the remaining labels only address the specific depictions in the diorama, correcting them or providing additional information—like an annotation would to a text. The label on clothing, for instance, reads:

The Lenape would have dressed up for an important meeting. But here they are wearing very little clothing—a clichéd way to show Native people. In reality, these diplomats would have worn fine fur robes with adornments signifying their important role as leaders. The faces of the Lenape men appear almost the same, as though they had no individual identities.

The labels remain informative rather than analytical, neither discussing the complexities of colonialism further nor addressing *why* history has been presented in this stereotypical, clichéd way. Furthermore, the intervention neither addresses nor takes responsibility for why the representation remained unchanged in the museum for more than three quarters of a century. Why did the AMNH decide to disregard the diorama in its 2012 update of the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial, which included the revision of the rest of the surrounding hall?

The Old New York Diorama is spatially removed from the museum's other installations involving human representations, which are concentrated in the anthropological halls and the hall of human evolution. In contrast to other human dioramas in those spaces, the Old New York diorama seems, by its placement and inclusion of European figures, to be intended as a historical rather than an "ethnographic" representation. This leads to an effect of correcting historical misinformation rather than engaging with the diorama as a cultural display in itself. Visitors reading the annotations' critical messaging cannot easily extend these ideas to the AMNH's other cultural displays. The re-examination attempts to outline what is misrepresented but neglects why and how these misrepresentations came into being in the first place, which would suggest more museum-wide problems requiring similar attention.

Boas, in his own time at the AMNH, was already concerned about how visitors relate to visual displays as opposed to informative labels. He acknowledged the museological challenge of providing didactic content to the average visitor, who responded largely to the spectacle of life groups or dioramas and not to their scholarly aims (Boas 1907, 924). The re-consideration of the Old New York Diorama attempts a didactic intervention into the image-based language of the diorama, which remains a spectacle.

The placement of the text on glass against the multicolored background is awkward and difficult to read. The visual power of the diorama thus still dominates. This limits the critical, educational potential and perpetuates the hierarchy of visual over textual information. The texts' illegibility also reinforces the sense that words are *supplemental*: not integral to the engagement with the diorama. Online the reconsideration of the diorama is represented by a photograph of the annotated diorama. The image can be maximized to fit the computer screen, which then unfolds plus-symbols to click on to retrieve the textual content in a more legible form by opening the label on a black background. This reinforces the separation of image and textual content, like in the museum installation where based on placement and position of the visitor either the diorama or the text can be consumed at a time. Cumulatively, the textual strategies only reinforce the annotation effect of the intervention.<sup>13</sup>

By using a strategy of annotation, the re-examination engages with the diorama as a historical artifact that is separated from its context of becoming. The old diorama is simply presented—or re-presented—as a timeless fixture of the institution worthy of preservation. The museum does not take direct responsibility for its creation, lasting presence, or underlying knowledge project.<sup>14</sup> The representations might be re-contextualized, however the diorama's role in the popularization of settler narratives and anthropological ideologies is overlooked. The history and power of the diorama as a meaning-making technology in itself, as Haraway and others have demonstrated, is not part of the intervention. This stands in contrast to the Digital Totem, which actively engages with the historical development of the Northwest Coast Hall and discusses, if only briefly, the shifting disciplinary frameworks underlying curatorial changes in anthropological museum representations.

This intervention places an emphasis on the treatment of symptoms rather than underlying causes: correcting representations is important, but so is the reflection on the system of settler colonialism in which they have occurred and have been perpetuated. Following Tuck and Yang, the intervention's narrative in the physical display and the accompanying webpage have the character of a "metaphorical" decolonizing discourse, which sidesteps the necessarily *unsettling* nature of decolonization (Tuck and Yang 2012). Tuck and Yang warn of the danger of settler individuals or institutions appropriating the language of decolonization as a metaphor to minimize feelings of guilt and ensure continued control of the discourse (Tuck and Yang 2012, 3). The textual supplement to the diorama allows the institution to present itself as progressively confronting colonial histories, while deflecting or postponing the need to review and revise the museum's reliance on settler logics in its greater institutional structures and their perpetuation in exhibits. The AMNH unveiled the re-considered diorama shortly before Indigenous Peoples' Day in 2018, which seems like an attempt to balance public opinion just prior to another set of anticipated DTP protests. In its approach to annotation, the AMNH falls back into some of the mechanisms of scientific popularization that Boas was concerned about: reducing the complexity of scholarly debates, eliminating the context for museum collections and representations, and presenting the displayed material as "fact" rather than as the result of intellectual and historical processes.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Addressing the Statue***

The temporary exhibition *Addressing the Statue*, which opened in 2019 along the walls of a corridor between the Hall of African Mammals, a museum shop, and the Hall of African Peoples, is intended to provide critical context for the previously mentioned equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt that greets visitors entering the museum's main entrance (Figure 3). Scholars and activists have long critiqued the statue for its racist representations, its glorification of Roosevelt, and implicit tone of Euro-American supremacy over the North American and African continents, which is perpetuated in the museum's outdated displays (Haraway 1984). Outside the museum's entrance, as a kind of preview of the exhibit, three small plaques were placed around the statue's pedestal informing the visitor that "Today, some see the statue as a heroic group; others, as a symbol of racial hierarchy." The plaques photographically reproduce the statue annotated with terms like "Native American figure," "U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919)," and "African figure," reinforcing the namelessness of the two men.

After entering the museum and passing through the Theodore Roosevelt Rotunda and the darkened, diorama-laden Hall of African Mammals, one encounters the Roosevelt statue again at the entrance of the exhibition. Photographically reproduced, Roosevelt faces the hall—as if he is looking into a salon filled with his own hunting trophies (which a number of the mounted specimens were in fact).<sup>16</sup> The exhibition does not feature any objects but relies on texts, quotations, photographs and video, and reproductions of archival material. The material is clustered thematically in segments, reminiscent of mind maps, along the corridor's walls (Figure 4). The opening wall text presents the exhibition as a response to the 2018 report by the New York City Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers, and its recommendation to leave the Roosevelt statue in place but to contextualize it (Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers 2018). The museum sets out to honor Roosevelt and its pride "in the historic association with the Roosevelt family," while simultaneously highlighting criticism of the statue for perpetuating views of racial



Figure 3. The Entrance to Exhibiting the Statue reproducing the museum's main entrance. Photograph by C. Chesek/©AMNH

hierarchy. Themes underlying the history of the statue, like sculptor's and planners' intentions, are addressed along one wall of the corridor. In this section, the sculpture is photographically disassembled into the individual figures to discuss "who else is represented." The stereotypical representations of the Plains Indian and African figure are problematized, and efforts are made to focus on contemporary African (Masai, specifically) and Plains Indian lives, following the strategy of the other interventions.

To complicate the potential significance of the statue, the exhibition relies on twenty-one individuals' voices consisting of members of the visiting public, activists, and scholars. The exhibition introduces them at the entrance of the gallery through photographic portraits and position. There is no label indicating who had responsibility for the exhibition within the institution, however, a fifteen-minute-long video playing at the entrance credits various AMNH staff members. Of the contributing voices, only David Hurst Thomas, curator in the AMNH Division of Anthropology, is currently an employee of the museum. The museum integrates these voices as texts using digital aesthetics, suggestive of the interface design of Twitter and other social media platforms. Verbal content is presented in short paragraphs, reminiscent of tweets, and displayed next to the speaker's "profile" with a portrait picture and basic information like name and occupation. The exhibit creates a hierarchy of voices by presenting "experts" with their academic and institutional credentials reinforcing their authority, while visitors are only associated with their home place.

The exhibition features interviewees' statements about the statue in a film at the entrance of the gallery as well as textually along the walls of the corridor organized under tags such as "... what should happen to the statue?," "keep it," "provide con-



Figure 4. Wall displaying the different perspectives in the exhibition presented around a reproduction of the Roosevelt equestrian statue and Theodore Roosevelt's quote displayed on the wall on the right hand side. Photograph by C. Chesek/©AMNH

text,” “take it down,” “complicated legacy,” and “important president.” This organization essentializes what are often nuanced statements. For instance, Monique Renee Scott expresses her ambivalence towards the statue and contemporary engagements with it:

Generally, I’m not for the destruction of monuments because they are embodiments of a history that we need to remember. Yet I sometimes hate thinking about things as “teachable moments.” Although this is a teachable moment. I think my resistance comes from [wondering] *why black people or people who experience racism have to accept everything as a “teachable moment”* (original emphasis).<sup>17</sup>

Her statement is grouped under “provide context,” even though she complicates that very approach by emphasizing the impact of continued misrepresentation and the emotional harm that such perpetuation can cause.

Throughout the display, the museum maintains the equivocal language from the outside plaques, balancing different perspectives, which results in the museum not taking its own stance. For instance, the sculptor James Earle Fraser is quoted: “Two figures at [Roosevelt’s] side are guides symbolizing the continents of Africa and America, and if you choose may stand for Roosevelt’s friendliness to all races.” This is contrasted with Philip Deloria’s and Andrew Ross’ perspective on his design as racist and hierarchical. A timeline of Roosevelt’s life is presented, in which the exhibit developers continue to rhetorically balance different perspectives. First celebrating Roosevelt’s status as a great naturalist and conservationist, then acknowledging that he held racist views, and finally leaving visitors with a positive note: “Roosevelt—like the country he led—has a complicated and sometimes troubling history. Nevertheless, he is widely considered one of the most important presidents.” The AMNH acknowledges its 1921 and 1932 hosting of two conferences on eugenics—which it immediately dismisses as erroneous science—under the eugenicist museum president Henry Fairfield Osborn,

who also chaired the commission for the memorial statue. The display only briefly mentions that Roosevelt “himself commented favorably on some aspects of eugenics” and that those theories “influenced the displays at that time.” How did they influence the displays? How have the displays changed since? No answers are offered. Curiously, the information on Osborn’s involvement in the commission of the memorial is placed in a separate cluster than the information on his eugenic convictions and their influence on displays. The display acknowledges problematic events in the museum’s past, while simultaneously limiting the critical discourse around them through strategic placement.

In this context, Roosevelt’s quote featured most prominently in the exhibition, as indexed by font size and placement separate from the exhibits contextualizations, seems curious. It reads:

To announce that there must be no criticism of the President ... is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public. Nothing but the truth should be spoken about him or anyone else. But it is even more important to tell the truth, pleasant or unpleasant, about him than about anyone else.

The quote is powerful but ambiguous. It presents Roosevelt as an aware, reflexive president and legitimizes the critical engagement with his legacy. Appearing as it did on the eve of President Donald Trump’s impeachment, it could be understood as a comment on today’s political climate. But it also suggests that the exhibit—and the controversy over the statue that prompted it—is primarily about Roosevelt himself, and not about the larger museum and its representations.

The exhibition has a reactive character: the museum responded to external pressure to maintain its public standing, having shown reluctance to do so previously. In a similar vein to the reconsideration of the Old New York Diorama, this exhibition emphasizes textual commentary over visual revision. This intervention in particular reveals the museum’s ambivalence towards reviewing its history critically. It attempts to dismantle the problematic historical representation through the featured quotes, thereby acknowledging the problematic entanglement of science, political ideologies, and exhibitions. However, the exhibition simultaneously engages in the conspicuous photographic reproduction of this problematic representation: the statue is featured four times in full and additionally repeated in segments. The photographic representation of the statue invites the visitors to continue their practice of taking photographs with the statue outside and with the dioramas inside the museum. Rather than paying attention to the many critical texts, visitors pass through the corridor stopping for a quick photograph in front of (a picture of) the statue, which is now—in contrast to outside—placed on a height that allows them to insert themselves into its hierarchical order. Instead of dismantling the representation, like some of the contributors attempt to do in their quotes, *Addressing the Statue* visually reproduces, reinforces, and amplifies it. This disconnect between text- and image-based engagement can also be observed in the Old New York diorama. In both cases the strategies prioritize annotation as a form of intervention into historic visual (mis)representations and, additionally, rely on museum-external voices to do the re-contextualizing work.

By attempting to balance different commentaries, the visitor is left with the impression that the museum has no active role in evaluating the statue’s status. The



institution seems even separate from the debate, not implicated by it—it is simply the venue that allows or invites multiple voices to be heard. In a similar vein, the *Addressing the Statue* online presence invites visitors to share their own experiences (for museum internal use), creating a sense of online forum, which mirrors the museum space and its design by speakers’ “profiles” and speech bubbles reminiscent of tweets or comments. While it is important to allow people to understand different perspectives on such a complicated topic, inaction is a political move as well, and how museums represent themselves and others is a positioning of institutions within the larger structures of power and knowledge (Luke 2002, 122). After refusing responsibility for the presence of the statue for years—the AMNH had consistently argued that the statue’s location on city property means the city is accountable to protestors, not the museum—the AMNH announced on June 21, 2020 that it had requested the city remove the statue (American Museum of Natural History 2020).<sup>18</sup> This decision occurred at the height of the eruption of Black Lives Matter protests and the demolishing of statues glorifying historical figures linked to slavery, white supremacy, and colonial injustices. This decision’s timing and press release raise questions of political opportunism.<sup>19</sup> In the event of the statue’s proposed removal, it will be interesting to see what the AMNH decides to do about the exhibition. Will it remain on display after the removal, as a testament to the controversial history and the museum’s ultimate response, or will it be taken down as well, contributing to the statue’s erasure?

## Conclusion: The Digital Aesthetics of Annotation

While the Digital Totem was the only digital interactive in the museum space, all three interventions have online presences, where the latter two include options that allow their audiences to interact more than their analog counterparts do. However, the aesthetics of the physical diorama intervention and statue exhibition are already reminiscent of digital media aesthetics and content delivery.<sup>20</sup> This suggests an interesting shift from digital museum applications, such as virtual exhibits, tours, and collections, which often attempt to replicate museum spaces and physical conventions of display and organization, to digital media conventions being used in curatorial and design decisions in analog museum spaces with a resulting emphasis on two-dimensionality (Economou 2008). In this, the AMNH and other museums are reacting to their audience’s daily content consumption happening to a large degree through data displayed on screens.

The design choices in the diorama and statue exhibition reinforce the annotation effect by framing the content as commentary. The digital aesthetics, most conspicuously in *Addressing the Statue*, suggest a social media “conversation” that implies multivocality, but simultaneously veils the museum’s curatorial authority and position on the matter, placing the burden of contextualization and institutional critique on the contributing voices (Mithlo 2004, 744). The inclusion of community voices pursued in all three case studies is a positive development as it opens up a space for self-representation often demanded by descendant communities and other stakeholders. While such inclusion is desirable, the interventions also show the limits of adding voices—as annotations that comment on persisting exhibits—alone as sufficient means for critical historical engagement. While the appearance of representation in the museum changes, structures of authority in regard to curatorial voice, larger administrative decisions, and political stance remain largely unaddressed. The digital media aesthetics enhance the annotation character of all three interventions, which



amount to *commentary* rather than revision of the fundamental museum *text*. This strategy at times decreases the intended critical effect of the interventions themselves by qualifying them as supplemental.

The Digital Totem, the reconsidered Old New York Diorama, and *Addressing the Statue* each attempt to revisit outdated, inaccurate, and/or stereotypical representations of non-Western peoples at AMNH. With the exception of the Digital Totem, which attempted critical, historical reflection, the museum neglects the processes behind and the cultural and historical context of the original productions of these misrepresentations. In the revised Old New York Diorama and the statue exhibit, the museum engages with the displays as independent objects—historical “artifacts” that just happen to be in (or outside) the museum instead of having been produced and/or preserved by it. The interventions seem to suggest that these artifacts can simply be corrected, contextualized, or contained by attaching textual annotations to them, thereby reinforcing the “narrative innocence for visual displays” (Bal 1996, 49). As a consequence, the museum treats the publicly visible symptoms of settler colonial history while overlooking the underlying structural conditions and ideological foundations that gave rise to museums and their project of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting the material culture of colonial subjects.

Martin and Harding (2017) reported that their interviewees in the Division of Anthropology were keenly aware of the need for large-scale revisions of representations and museum practices behind the scenes while citing conservatism in the administration and bureaucratic factors as reasons for a lack of action. The three interventions with their annotation character suggest funding limitations imposed on such exhibition projects and potentially also administrative restrictions on the use of explicitly self-critical, destabilizing curatorial language (Martin and Harding 2017, 11). It might be argued that the complexities of negotiating multiple agendas within an institution are manifested in the final, public forms of the three interventions as annotations, which show some critical potential but never seem to be critical enough of the institutional history to actually unsettle the main “text.” The land acknowledgement now accompanying the Old New York Diorama, for instance, suggests that the institution is moving toward a more progressive, self-aware position. However, this acknowledgement remains visually non-prominent and is not repeated at any of the museum’s entrances, where such plaques have become customary and where the AMNH very prominently credits its donors and contributors.

How such exhibition initiatives can be appropriated for marketing purposes to distract from larger institutional issues and to modify critiques is demonstrated by the reconsidered diorama’s uncovering shortly before Indigenous Peoples’ Day in 2018. Similarly, the fact that the museum announced its sudden decision to request the removal of the Theodore Roosevelt statue at a moment of social unrest and increased public demands for the revision of historic representations seems equally performative, especially since the AMNH administration had refused such responsibility for years. This raises questions about different agents’ motives for such transformations and the value of such projects expressed internally—for instance, in various timelines, budgets, and scopes—but rarely made public in exhibition content.

I would like to close by acknowledging the significance for the museum field of such an important institution to begin to publicly reckon with its historic displays, indicating a major shift. However, there still seems to be a discrepancy between the institutional self-representation of these interventions as being motivated by progressive

ideals, and the fact that the interventions themselves only minimally, if at all, directly address the museum's past, institutional logics, and legacies of settler colonialism. In this way, the museum carefully controls the discourse around appropriate institutional steps towards transformation, representing itself as embracing external voices while preserving past displays and its own futurity as a settler institution.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Aaron Glass, Jane Anderson, Emily Hayflick, and Amanda Thompson for thoughtful feedback on earlier versions of this essay. I am also thankful to Jason Baird Jackson for his review and constructive comments.

## Notes

1. See "Digital Totem | AMNH," American Museum of Natural History, accessed September 16, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/northwest-coast/digital-totem>.
2. See "Old New York Diorama," American Museum of Natural History, accessed September 12, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/theodore-roosevelt-memorial/hall/old-new-york-diorama>.
3. See "Addressing the Statue: Special Exhibit | AMNH," American Museum of Natural History, accessed September 16, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/addressing-the-theodore-roosevelt-statue>.
4. See for instance "Descendant Communities | AMNH," American Museum of Natural History, accessed October 19, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/research/anthropology/projects/descendant-communities>. And "Conservation of Siberian Collections | AMNH," American Museum of Natural History, accessed October 19, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/research/anthropology/projects/conservation-projects-at-amnh/conservation-of-siberian-collections>.
5. For additional historical scholarship of the AMNH and its culture halls, see (Jacknis 1985; 2004; 2015; Sachedina 2011; Schildkrout 1988; Schildkrout and Lacey 2017).
6. See "Digital Totem | AMNH," American Museum of Natural History, accessed September 16, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/northwest-coast/digital-totem>. Some of the content of the Digital Totem, like community specific information, can now be accessed through the Northwest Coast Hall webpage, see "Northwest Coast Hall," American Museum of Natural History, accessed September 16, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/northwest-coast>.
7. This tool was maintained on the respective webpages. See for instance "Tlingit," American Museum of Natural History, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/northwest-coast/tlingit>.
8. See for instance American Museum of Natural History. "Coast Salish." American Museum of Natural History. Accessed September 16, 2020. <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/northwest-coast/coast-salish>.
9. See American Museum of Natural History. "Northwest Coast Hall." American Museum of Natural History. Accessed September 16, 2020. <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/northwest-coast>.
10. See *Behind the Updates to Old New York Diorama*, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndj59hGuSSy&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndj59hGuSSy&feature=emb_title). The video is embedded in and a transcript is provided on the AMNH's Old New York Diorama webpage, see "Old New

York Diorama,” American Museum of Natural History, accessed September 12, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/theodore-roosevelt-memorial/hall/old-new-york-diorama>.

11. After I formulated this essay, I came across a webpage referring to the intervention as annotation. See Hermes Creative Awards. ““Old New York” Diorama Reinterpretation.” Accessed September 30, 2020. <https://enter.hermesawards.com>.

12. See “Old New York Diorama,” American Museum of Natural History, accessed September 12, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/theodore-roosevelt-memorial/hall/old-new-york-diorama>.

13. In a comparable text-based approach to engaging with historical displays of First Nations, the Museum of Vancouver similarly relies on overlaid text in its show *c̓əsnaʔəm: City Before the City*. One glass case presents facial reconstructions made from excavated skulls and displayed in the museum during the early twentieth century as a means of conveying racial hierarchies. Instead of giving these skulls the center stage, however, the museum has covered about two thirds of the glass case with text quoting local Musqueam people reflecting on the history of anthropology and the new relations they have formed with anthropologists. Next to the case, a large wall label details the history of the casts, how they have been displayed at the museum, and what that reveals about the ideological formation of anthropology at the time. Here the label and quotes become the main message of the exhibition, displacing the primacy of the problematic visual display it comments on.

14. For works on and critique of dioramas see, for instance, (Glass 2009; Griffiths 2002; Jacknis 2015; Rader and Cain 2014; Scott 2007; Wonders 1993).

15. Boas wrote about his concern that popularization of scientific knowledge would lead to its simplification and the assumption in museum visitors that they had fully comprehended what was represented (1907, 922–23).

16. I am referring to Haraway’s (1984) famous analysis of the dioramas.

17. The museum introduces her as: Monique Renee Scott (Ph.D. Director of Museum Studies, Bryn Mawr College, and Consulting Scholar, Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology). Other scholars are introduced in the same format. For instance, “Philip Deloria, (Ph.D., Dakota descent, Professor of History, Harvard University).”

18. Since this essay was accepted for publication the removal of the statue has been voted on by the NYC Public Design Commission, finalizing its removal. On June 21, 2021 the New York City Public Design Commission voted unanimously for the removal of the Theodore Roosevelt Equestrian Statue and its relocation to a space dedicated to the former president. See: “Design Commission Meeting Agenda, Monday, June 21, 2021,” NYC Public Design Commission. Accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/designcommission/downloads/pdf/6-21-21-Public-Agenda.pdf> and “Public Design Commission Public Meeting, Monday, June 21, 2021,” NYC Design [video], accessed June 24, 2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmYz35R9thg>

“Equestrian Statue of Theodore Roosevelt by James Earle Fraser: Proposed Relocation, Theodore Roosevelt Park, MD,” NYC Parks and American Museum of Natural History, accessed June 24, 2021 <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/designcommission/downloads/pdf/06-21-2021-pres-DPR-p-T-Roosevelt.pdf>

19. For the press release, see American Museum of Natural History, “Roosevelt Equestrian Statue Removal: Press Release | AMNH,” June 21, 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/about/press-center/amnh-requests-statue-removal>.

20. In her article on writing exhibition labels “Less is More. And More is Less,” Judy Rand (2016) describes how brevity of exhibition labels positively influences visitor attraction to labels and general attention. She directly references tweets as a model for exhibition labels to meet visitor needs of content delivery (Rand 2016, 37).

## References Cited

- American Museum of Natural History. 1989. "Annual Report, 1988–1989." Accessed September 12, 2020. <http://digitallibrary.amnh.org/handle/2246/6303>.
- . 2017. "American Museum of Natural History Begins Major Project to Restore and Update Northwest Coast Hall." Accessed September 12, 2020. <https://www.amnh.org/about/press-center/american-museum-of-natural-history-begins-major-project-to-restore-and-update-historic-northwest-coast-hall>.
- . 2018. *Behind the Updates to Old New York Diorama*. Accessed September 12, 2020. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=190&v=ndj59hGuSSy&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=190&v=ndj59hGuSSy&feature=emb_logo).
- . 2019. "Announcing 150th Anniversary Celebration | AMNH." Accessed September 12, 2020. <https://www.amnh.org/about/press-center/150-anniversary-announcement>.
- . 2020. "Roosevelt Equestrian Statue Removal: Press Release | AMNH." Accessed September 12, 2020. <https://www.amnh.org/about/press-center/amnh-requests-statue-removal>.
- . n.d. "Digital Totem | AMNH." *American Museum of Natural History* website. Accessed September 16, 2020. <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/northwest-coast/digital-totem>.
- Ames, Michael M. 1992. *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Bal, Mieke. 1996. "Telling, Showing, Showing Off." In *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis*, 13–56. New York: Routledge.
- Boas, Franz. 1907. "Some Principles of Museum Administration." *Science* 25 (650): 921–33.
- Clifford, James. 1985. "Objects and Selves—An Afterword." In *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, edited by George W. Stocking, 236–46. History of Anthropology, v. 3. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press.
- . 1988. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Decolonize This Place. 2016. "Indigenous People's Day, 2016, Declaration." <https://decolonizethisplace.org/monh>.
- Economou, Maria. 2008. "A World of Interactive Exhibits." In *Museum Informatics: People, Information, and Technology in Museums*, edited by Paul F. Marty and Katherine Burton Jones, 137–56. Routledge Studies in Library and Information Science 2. New York: Routledge.
- Geismar, Haidy. 2018. *Museum Object Lessons for the Digital Age*. London: UCL Press.
- Glass, Aaron. 2009. "Frozen Poses: Hamat'sa Dioramas, Recursive Representation, and the Making of a Kwakwaka'wakw Icon." In *Photography, Anthropology, and History: Expanding the Frame*, edited by Christopher A. Morton and Elizabeth Edwards, 89–116. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Griffiths, Alison. 2002. "Life Groups and the Modern Museum Spectator." In *Wondrous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology, and Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture*, 3–45. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Haraway, Donna. 1984. "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936." *Social Text* 11: 20–64. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466593>.
- Harding, Susan, and Emily Martin. 2016. "Anthropology Now and Then in the American Museum of Natural History." *Anthropology Now* 8 (3): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19428200.2016.1242906>.
- Hinsley, Curtis M. 1994. *The Smithsonian and the American Indian: Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Jacknis, Ira. 1985. "Franz Boas and Exhibits: On the Limitations of the Museum Method of Anthropology." In *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, edited by George W. Stocking, 75–111. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

- . 2004. “‘A Magic Place’— The Northwest Coast Indian Hall at the American Museum of Natural History.” In *Coming to Shore: Northwest Coast Ethnology, Traditions, and Visions*, edited by Marie Mauzé, Michael Eugene Harkin, and Sergei Kan, 221–50. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- . 2015. “In the Field/En Plein Air: The Art of Anthropological Display at the American Museum of Natural History, 1905–30.” In *The Anthropology of Expeditions: Travel, Visualities, Afterlives*, edited by Joshua A. Bell, Erin L. Hasinoff, and Peter N. Miller, 119–73. New York: Bard Graduate Center.
- Jonaitis, Aldona, and Aaron Glass. 2010. *The Totem Pole: An Intercultural History*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Karp, Ivan, and Steven Lavine, eds. 1991. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Lonetree, Amy. 2012. *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Luke, Timothy W. 2002. *Museum Politics: Power Plays at the Exhibition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Martin, Emily, and Susan Harding. 2017. “Anthropology Now and Then in the American Museum of Natural History: An Alternative Museum.” *Anthropology Now* 9 (2): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19428200.2017.1340758>.
- Mathisen, Silje Opdahl. 2017. “Still Standing: On the Use of Dioramas and Mannequins in Sámi Exhibitions.” *Journal Nordic Museology / Nordisk Museologi* 1 (January): 58–72.
- Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers. 2018. “Report to the City of New York January 2018.”
- Mignolo, Walter. 2000. *Local Histories/Global Designs : Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mithlo, Nancy Marie. 2004. “‘Red Man’s Burden’: The Politics of Inclusion in Museum Settings.” *American Indian Quarterly* 28 (3–4): 743–63.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o. 2008. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Phillips, Ruth B. and Christopher Burghard Steiner, eds. 1999. *Unpacking Culture Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Price, Sally. 1989. *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rader, Karen A., and Victoria E. M. Cain. 2014. “The Drama of the Diorama, 1910–1935.” In *Life on Display: Revolutionizing U.S. Museums of Science and Natural History in the Twentieth Century*, 51–90. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rand, Judy. 2016. “Less Is More. And More Is Less.” *Exhibition* 36 (1): 36–41.
- Sachedina, Amal. 2011. “The Nature of Difference: Forging Arab Asia at the American Museum of Natural History.” *Museum Anthropology* 34 (2): 142–55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1379.2011.01114.x>.
- Schildkrout, Enid. 1988. “Art as Evidence: A Brief History of the American Museum of Natural History African Collection.” In *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*, edited by Susan Vogel, 153–60. New York: Center for African Art.
- Schildkrout, Enid, and Jacklyn Grace Lacey. 2017. “Shifting Perspectives: The Man in Africa Hall at the American Museum of Natural History at 50.” *Anthropology Now* 9 (2): 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19428200.2017.1340761>.
- Schudson, Michael. 1997. “Cultural Studies and the Social Construction of ‘Social Construction’: Notes on ‘Teddy Bear Patriarchy.’” In *From Sociology to Cultural Studies: New Perspectives*, edited by Elizabeth Long, 379–98. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Scott, Monique. 2007. *Rethinking Evolution in the Museum: Envisioning African Origins*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203937488>.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. (1999) 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd ed. London: Zed Books.

- Stocking, George W., ed. 1985. *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Tuck, Eve, and K Wayne Yang. 2012. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1): 1–40. <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630>.
- Vogel, Susan, ed. 1988. *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*. New York: Center for African Art.
- Wonders, Karen. 1993. *Habitat Dioramas: Illusions of Wilderness in Museums of Natural History*. Dissertation: Uppsala University.

Leonie Treier is a PhD candidate at the Bard Graduate Center. Her work focuses on histories of museum collecting and the representation of Native American material culture in (and beyond) museums. She holds the MPhil in Visual, Material and Museum Anthropology at the University of Oxford and has been a pre-doctoral fellow at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. Her doctoral research focuses on previously neglected ethnographic objects associated with George Catlin's "Indian Gallery."