

CONTESTING

KNOWLEDGE

Museums and Indigenous Perspectives

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### 3

## Reinventing George Heye

### *Nationalizing the Museum of the American Indian and Its Collections*

ANN MCMULLEN

#### Nothing but Stories

The year 2004 was important for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). For many, NMAI's opening on Washington DC's National Mall marked the fulfillment of overdue obligations and long-awaited dreams. Few recognized that 2004 also marked a forgotten anniversary: a century had passed since George Gustav Heye began cataloging the objects in the museum's collection. Press coverage repeatedly mentioned NMAI's roots in New York's Museum of the American Indian but referred to Heye as a "passionate," "obsessive," and "rapacious" collector and a "buccaneer." Directly or indirectly responsible for removing treasured objects from Native hands or lands, Heye's contributions could hardly be commemorated. However, Mr. Richard Kessler noticed this treatment and addressed himself to the *Washington Post*: "The Smithsonian is ignoring and . . . demeaning the contribution of its chief benefactor. . . . Mr. Heye, whom *The Post* disdainfully called a 'boxcar' collector, . . . contributed his entire collection for public use and exhibition. . . . But for his 'boxcar' collection, we'd have no Museum of the American Indian today. . . . It is high time for the ingrates in charge of this museum . . . to acknowledge and credit their benefactor." It is doubtful that NMAI staff members would have disagreed with Kessler's remarks, because the image of Heye portrayed by the press was delivered to reporters in their NMAI press kits.<sup>1</sup>

Few at the NMAI think or speak about Heye except to repeat similar second- and thirdhand anecdotes and sound bites that are learned by

watching and emulating others. As Thomas King suggests in *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*, “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are.”<sup>2</sup> And like any mythology, stories told about Heye have grown over generations, and their roots are often shadowed or unknown. As defined by Eric Hobsbawm, this is the stuff of invented traditions, those “invented, constructed and formally instituted . . . within a brief and dateable period.”<sup>3</sup>

Here I explore the invention of George Heye and how his image has been shaped by NMAI’s need to serve a different mission than Heye himself espoused. Because NMAI simultaneously holds part of the national collections and supports Native empowerment, explicating Heye’s collection involves both U.S. and Indigenous nationalism and generates interesting rhetoric.

Regarding rhetoric—the persuasive use of language—others have used the same texts I employ here to support very different interpretations of George Heye. Ideas for this essay arose during my work on NMAI’s collections planning documents.<sup>4</sup> Struck by NMAI rhetoric about Heye, I sought alternative background materials. At first I only hoped to understand Heye’s transition from collector to museum founder but was caught up in uncovering a very different story. At this point, I make no claim to exhaustive research on George Heye and his intent; but given readily available material that contradicts prevailing NMAI stories, I suggest that those who have described Heye only as an obsessive and even nefarious collector have done so based on their own preconceptions or disregard for contradictory evidence. Nonetheless, while I believe George Heye’s story is more complex and more honorable than how it has been told, I doubt my version will totally rehabilitate him. He was—like anyone—a man of his time. However, for the NMAI, he remains an inconvenient truth and has become a victim of its self-told history.

There is more to this than simply correcting Heye’s biography. While discussing this essay with a group of coworkers, I explained Heye’s intent in creating his museum. Among the dissonant voices, I heard a Pawnee man who escorts Native and non-Native collections researchers say, “What do you mean? I thought he was just a crazy white man—*that’s what we tell everybody!*” He realized that labeling George Heye as an obsessive

collector who accumulated objects solely to own them also dehistoricized the collections and implied that they grew randomly. He recognized that NMAI could—and should—take responsibility for understanding Heye’s motivations and how the collection was formed.

Investigation of collectors and their impact on museums—including how collections were assembled, how collectors have shaped what is preserved in museums, and how collections can be integral to knowledge projects—is not a new subject. Susan Pearce and James Clifford suggest that we cannot let our interest in objects and collections obscure the histories of how they were accumulated since this is part of the deeper history of museums and colonialism.<sup>5</sup>

There is no single path to understanding connections between collecting and museums. Much scholarship has focused on large-scale, individual collectors; but George Stocking rightly suggests that we examine their lives in the context of wealth, since objects represent wealth and making collections implies possession of the resources needed for their care, maintenance, and display.<sup>6</sup> The names and biographies of collectors who epitomize this—Hearst, Horniman, and Pitt Rivers—are reasonably familiar. However, the attention paid to individual collectors—whether personal or scholarly—has been rather unequal, with more attention paid to individuals who collected for their own purposes rather than research. Far less notice has been given to collectors working in service to anthropology and how their work affects what museums hold today. This imbalance is somewhat contradictory, since Anthony Shelton suggests that museums prefer systematic collectors—those focused on the increase of collective knowledge—and that other collectors often disappear in museums’ self-representations. Shelton and Clifford suggest that this results from the perception that these good, controlled, systematic collectors seem rational while the others—whose intents are less transparent—are cast as obsessive or inscrutable.<sup>7</sup>

For many, collectors—especially those of the impassioned variety—are a kind of stereotype. Jean Baudrillard, in particular, suggests that collectors are incomplete human beings who create an alternate reality through their collections. Others focus on the guilty and almost sexual pleasure collectors take in acquiring things and arranging, handling, or even fon-

dling them.<sup>8</sup> Altogether, this emotional involvement with objects seems at odds with museums' scholarly objectivity, so we should not be surprised that museums often shy away from delving too deeply into collectors' motivations. However, because these collections carry their own intellectual burdens, we need to unpack the collectors' agendas rather than hiding them behind those of museums themselves.

In studying collectors and collections, Susan Pearce suggests that collectors' assemblages can be characterized as souvenirs, fetish objects, and systematic collections; but this is based largely on contemporary collectors. In contradiction, Brian Durrans notes that we should not assume that we can confidently understand the motivations of colonial and modern Euro-American collectors, because concepts like self, other, identity, scientist, and collector have shifted over time. He further suggests that nineteenth-century collectors' cognitive and conceptual distance from us (as modern-day analysts) may be as great as that between them and the people from whom they collected and that—from our own viewpoint—collectors may be a kind of "Other."<sup>9</sup>

Durrans's argument encourages reexamination of collectors who are perceived as irrational or obsessive and reinterpretation of their collections. Often, those of us who study such collections view them as small slices of reality and compare them to our own, presumably broader, cultural conceptions. However, Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles, discussing collecting in Melanesia, suggest that we examine collections not as partial records but instead as "complete, although particular, outcomes of individual sets of colonial practices."<sup>10</sup> This should remind us that any individual's collection may represent a complete image of what that collector envisioned and that identifying that imagined whole is primary to understanding the collector.

Altogether, this means that studying collectors and their collections is about more than biography. To understand collectors' legacies, we must understand what they intended to create, how they did it, and what they said and recorded about their collections. At the same time, we must also examine museums' motives and intents and how they have made use of collections for their own purposes, even when the museums' purposes are vastly different than those of collectors themselves.

## Museums, Colonialism, Anthropology, and the Primacy of Objects

Much has been said about museums and colonialism, but the subject deserves some brief repetition here. Early European museums focused more on nature and antiquity, but works by non-Western people, who were encountered during exploration and conquest, soon followed. Later public museums, and how they ordered and explained "curiosities," helped create ways of thinking about people represented by objects. With collections swelled by military souvenirs, museums vacillated between representing others, colonial and imperial rule, and Western hegemony.<sup>11</sup> Museums and their ideological cousins—world's fairs and Wild West shows—brought the world to visitors for consumption. Museums offered concrete representations of travel writing, presenting panoptic views of time and geography that could be comprehended as they were traversed. While world's fairs offered synchronic views, museums were seen as representing the past.<sup>12</sup>

The anthropology that grew up in museums was equally predicated on the past; and by creating the "ethnographic present," it temporally distanced Indigenous people from colonizers and museum visitors. Salvage anthropology and primitive art collecting irrevocably placed Indigenous objects in museums, where they were preserved and used to create images of the vanquished.<sup>13</sup> Because Native works did not fit art museums' focus on high culture, anthropology museums helped make Native cultures accessible to the public; but, for some, museums represented "the final ugly and unadorned edge of Manifest Destiny."<sup>14</sup> Collecting by individuals and museums prolonged colonial patterns and cultivated nostalgia for the lost past. Museums' disregard for Native arts made for sale fostered images of unchanging Native people and made the museum "a shrine to the premodern."<sup>15</sup>

While anthropology shed its dependence on objects along with its museum roots, objects remained museums' central focus. They were "real things" fixed in time and worked well as the basis for representation. And because ethnology's focus was on nonliterate peoples, objects became primary texts for understanding Native people. For "prehistory" represented by archaeological collections, this was equally true: the Smithsonian's Otis Tufton Mason states that it was a "story written in things."<sup>16</sup>

It is at this moment in anthropological thinking—the earliest years of the twentieth century—that George Gustav Heye comes on the scene.

### Will the Real George Heye Please Stand Up?

First, I should relate facts about George Heye that cannot be contested; everything else can be considered spin, either my own or others. George Gustav Heye was born in 1874 to Carl Friedrich Gustav Heye, a U.S. emigrant from Germany, and Marie Antoinette Lawrence Heye, whose family were longtime New Yorkers. Carl Heye made his money in oil, and George Heye's upbringing was considered privileged. He graduated from Columbia University's School of Mines in 1896 with a degree in electrical engineering. His employer sent him to Arizona in 1897, where he observed the wife of his Navajo foreman chewing her husband's shirt to kill the lice. He said, "I bought the shirt, became interested in aboriginal customs, and acquired other objects as opportunity offered, sending them back home. . . . That shirt was the start of my collection. Naturally when I had a shirt I wanted a rattle and moccasins. And then the collecting bug seized me and I was lost. . . . When I returned to New York . . . I found quite an accumulation of objects . . . and I began to read rather intensively on the subject of the Indians."<sup>17</sup>

From 1901 to 1909 Heye worked in investment banking, which he left to focus on collecting. He had already moved from buying single objects to large collections and had 10,000 objects by 1906, maintaining a catalog on three-by-five-inch cards.<sup>18</sup> He bought collections, sponsored expeditions and publications, and traveled and collected himself. The collection's rapid growth—and its directions—were influenced by Marshall Saville at Columbia and by George Pepper of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). By 1908, having filled his apartment and a warehouse, Heye made arrangements with the University of Pennsylvania's University Museum to exhibit his collection but hired his own staff. His mother died in 1915, and he inherited an estimated \$10 million. That year, he married his second wife, Thea Page, honeymooning at Georgia's Nacoochee Mound excavations, which he funded with the Bureau of American Ethnology.

In 1916, with the collection totaling 58,000 objects, Heye was offered a building site at 155th and Broadway in New York in a complex of cul-

tural organizations.<sup>19</sup> Supported by affluent friends, the Museum of the American Indian (MAI) was built; and Heye deeded his entire collection to it, endowed the museum, and was named director for life. The museum opened in 1922, and Heye built a professional staff and kept collecting. By 1926 he had filled his museum and built a separate storage facility in the Bronx. However, with the deaths of two major benefactors in 1928, Heye had to dismiss most of his staff. With more than 163,000 objects by 1929, Heye continued purchasing collections assembled by others. At his death in 1957, the collections numbered over 225,000 catalog numbers, representing perhaps 700,000 individual items. These represent approximately 85 percent of the NMAI's current object holdings.<sup>20</sup>

### *In the Eyes of His Contemporaries: 1957–1960*

Heye's official biographer, J. Alden Mason of the University Museum, identifies 1903 as the beginning of Heye's professional work: "Collecting as a hobby was now at an end, and [he] proceeded to fulfill that destiny which the Fates had ordained at his birth . . . the most comprehensive collections of the American Indian in the world." Samuel K. Lothrop, who worked for Heye before departing for Harvard, stresses Heye's contributions: "He occupied a unique place in . . . New World anthropology, because he assembled the largest existing collection representing the aboriginal cultures of this hemisphere. . . . Heye never studied anthropology but . . . was not a dilettante and, by experience in handling the material, he became a connoisseur in many phases of native art. . . . From 1904 onward, he was not satisfied with mere purchases of specimens, but sent out well-financed expeditions."<sup>21</sup> Others, including E. K. Burnett, who worked as Heye's administrator, considered him a collector: "As with all dedicated collectors, George Heye was ruthless in his dealings."<sup>22</sup>

In 1960 Kevin Wallace of the *New Yorker* published a less adulatory piece, largely based on quotes from an anonymous professor who spoke freely and somewhat bitterly: "I doubt . . . his goal was anything more than to own the biggest damned hobby collection in the world. . . . George didn't buy Indian stuff . . . to study the life of a people . . . it never crossed his mind. . . . He bought all those objects solely . . . to own them—for what purpose, he never said. He . . . was fortified by sufficient monomania to build up a superlative, disciplined collection."<sup>23</sup>

As a whole, Heye's friends and contemporaries provided what were probably intended as humorous anecdotes, but ultimately they have been accepted as judgments. Much of what later became legend stems from these anecdotes, including characterization of Heye as "a boxcar collector" with a "genius for being indiscriminate."<sup>24</sup>

*The Museum of the American Indian: 1960–1989*

Frederick J. Dockstader (Oneida and Navajo) became director of the MAI in 1960 and seldom mentioned Heye. In his *Indian Art of the Americas*, Dockstader simply mentions the excellent collection Heye had assembled. For a book of museum "masterworks," Dockstader reprises Heye's life, noting his "primary desire was . . . to provide a complete picture of Indian life . . . a simple stirring stick was . . . as significant . . . as the most elaborately carved and painted totem pole."<sup>25</sup>

Following Dockstader's dismissal in 1975, the museum tried to increase its visibility with exhibitions at Manhattan's U.S. Customs House; but the self-image it presented was that of a magnificent collection of Native heritage and not George Heye's lifework. In their publications, curators Anna Roosevelt and James Smith ignore Heye. A 1978 article by Vince Wilcox focuses on the collection — "considered by many to be the legacy of a single man and his obsession" — and calls Heye, "first and foremost a collector, not a true scholar . . . the Museum was for him the most expedient method to develop a major collection." Roland Force's *The Heye and the Mighty*, which recounts the MAI's struggle to relocate and the Smithsonian transfer, entitled his chapter on Heye with one word: "Obsession."<sup>26</sup>

*The National Museum of the American Indian: 1989–Present*

The early years at the NMAI saw little concentration on George Heye. With the opening of New York's George Gustav Heye Center (GGHC), an accompanying book called Heye "the epitome of the obsessive collector," while another suggested that the collection "reflects the monumental—and ultimately unfathomable—desire of George Gustav Heye to possess as many objects as possible."<sup>27</sup> In 1999 Clara Sue Kidwell acknowledged that Heye knew the value of systematic collecting and documentation but focused on his "idiosyncratic passion" for older material.<sup>28</sup>

With the 1999 opening of the Cultural Resources Center in Suitland,

Maryland (where the collections would be housed), and the groundbreaking for the NMAI Mall Museum, attention shifted to Washington. In 2000, Smithsonian secretary Larry Small authored an article entitled "A Passionate Collector." Rather than discuss the value of the collection, he focuses on Heye as an individual collector, drawing heavily on anecdotes provided by Wallace's 1960 article, including one anecdote where Heye was said to have "quizzed small-town morticians about their recent dead who might have owned Indian artifacts." Drawing on Wallace, Small calls Heye a "great vacuum cleaner of a collector" but credits him with saving a "legacy of inestimable worth" through his "life of focused accumulation."<sup>29</sup>

In 2003 NMAI director Rick West summarized Heye's work: "he collected diligently, indeed, some would say almost obsessively, dispatching teams . . . to the far reaches. . . . They sent Native objects back . . . literally in railway boxcars because the volume was so great." Other references to a "small army of collectors" made Heye's motives imperial.<sup>30</sup> However, most replayed now common characterizations: "obsessive," "rapacious," "inveterate," and "boxcar collector."<sup>31</sup> Curator Mary Jane Lenz repeats the same stories but attempts to explain Heye, identifying his aim of creating "the leading institution in this country devoted to the scientific study of American Indian archaeology and ethnology." She also quotes Heye to suggest that his interest was not solely possession: "They are not alone objects to me, but sources of vistas and dreams of their makers and owners. Whether utilitarian or ceremonial, I try to feel why and how the owner felt regarding them." *Native Universes*, the major publication that accompanied the opening of the NMAI Mall Museum, never mentions George Heye.<sup>32</sup>

Through press coverage during the 2004 opening, specific images of Heye were developed, fed largely by the museum's press releases.<sup>33</sup> The biography in the press releases called Heye's first object, "the beginning of his passion for collecting" and described his life's work as "buying everything in sight."<sup>34</sup> The press reveled in Heye as a passionate collector who was driven by unexplained motives and indifferent to living Native people, as opposed to the founder of a large museum that was taken over by the Smithsonian.<sup>35</sup> Quotes from director West compounded the mystery: "he loved the stuff. [But] it was never quite clear how much he really thought

about the people who made [it].” All-absorbing passion was a common theme: “collecting Indian objects was his passion in life, plain and simple.” Insanity and consumption were equally prevalent: “The extraordinary collection was formed by the monomaniacal passion of George Gustav Heye. . . . His eclectic taste devoured with equal fervor both the artistically exquisite and the ploddingly mundane.” Harking back to the whispered “Rosebud” of *Citizen Kane*, Heye was compared to William Randolph Hearst in his “obsession for hunting and gathering other peoples’ stuff.”<sup>36</sup>

#### *External Views*

Recent scholarly discussions of Heye are much the same, referring to him as “an institution in himself” and as “the greatest collector of all.”<sup>37</sup> While he did support expeditions and excavations, he is said to have done so, “for the enhancement of his private collections.”<sup>38</sup> However, the collection’s size and how it was acquired are inflated, making Heye’s behavior look even more extreme. Some set Heye within the context of early twentieth-century anthropology and museums but labeled him “a wealthy individual with a passion for rapidly buying a huge collection,” which became a “monomaniacal dedication.”<sup>39</sup> Edmund Carpenter’s study identifies Heye as compulsive, secretive, and driven to “amass the greatest collection, ever,” suggesting that “Robber Baron bargaining” — rather than the objects themselves — was Heye’s driving desire.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, suggesting that Heye’s goal was to amass a huge collection identifies his motives by matching them with his results, rather than understanding the goals he set for himself.

#### *A Different View of George Heye and the Museum of the American Indian*

All these stories may be true, but they are not the whole story. The authors I cite have often overemphasized aspects of George Heye’s life — multiple marriages, epicurean tastes, fast driving, and love of cigars — because he left so few personal writings. I believe we need to extract George Heye from this cult of personality and examine his intent in building a collection, sponsoring research and publications, and founding and running a museum. Again, my goal is not to valorize Heye but to understand what

values shaped the collection and how it might be used by the NMAI, Native people, and Native nations.

First, we need to deal with George Heye as a collector, and he clearly spent part of his life thinking of himself as a collector.<sup>41</sup> Because Native objects inspired Heye’s interest and started his studies, we can conclude that his early collections stood for Indian people; but this does not tell us what Native people or objects meant to his identity. He did object to having his collection or his museum absorbed by others, suggesting that he valued its identification with himself. However, the museum was not Heye’s primary self-identification: some acquaintances — and even his own son — were said to be unaware of its role in his life. And, despite repeated references to his “accumulation,” he differed from individuals who secretly fill their homes with old newspapers or hundreds of cats: he shared his collection with visitors.<sup>42</sup>

George Heye thus began as a collector and may have maintained that tendency; but, as Shepard Krech has said of collectors who found museums, it is “difficult to separate what drove them to collect from what propelled them to build museums . . . after a certain point they collected to fill their museums.” Additionally, we should not underestimate the intellectual role of gentleman scientists: in England, two exceptional collectors — Frederick John Horniman and Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers — are honored primarily as museum founders, although their lives closely resemble Heye’s. I believe that George Heye’s role as museum builder — rather than collector — deserves further examination.<sup>43</sup>

Heye did not initiate his collections catalog until 1904, soon after he purchased a significant southwestern ceramic collection. This turn to systematic collecting and documentation marks the beginning of his museum idea. Although the museum was founded in 1916, Heye had been talking about it at least since 1906, when he appealed to Archer Huntington. With support from his mother, Heye had already funded important excavations in Mexico and Ecuador, the beginning of a long-term Latin American research plan laid out by Marshall Saville and undertaken long before the museum became reality. Here, Heye’s support for systematic Latin American research predated the American Anthropological Association’s 1907 identification of the region as a priority. By 1908 the name “Heye Museum” was being used on letterhead and by those who visited.<sup>44</sup>

The collection's 1908 move to the University Museum was noted in a *Science* announcement, indicating that it was considered scientifically important.<sup>45</sup>

*Aims and Objects of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation*

Although anthropology's twentieth-century transition from museums to universities is now seen as a matter of course, it could not have been foreseen when Heye began planning his museum in 1903, several years before Franz Boas turned his complete attention to anthropology at Columbia University. Steven Conn has shown that nineteenth-century studies of Native people shaped American intellectual and disciplinary development, including history, literature, and anthropology. American archaeology was particularly important to anthropology's growth but was later replaced by an emphasis on salvage ethnography and Western civilization's Middle Eastern origins. At the University Museum and the American Museum of Natural History — which Heye may have considered models — American archaeology was increasingly marginalized. Although the Smithsonian and Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology retained strong programs, New York museums did not serve Heye's interest in archaeology. Simultaneously, museums began to move toward public education, often collecting to develop exhibits rather than pursue science.<sup>46</sup>

By contrast, Heye's interests were specifically New York, adult education, and American Indians; in a 1915 letter to Boas, he explained, "When I started my collections I was in business downtown. . . . When I endeavored . . . to find some place to go . . . [to] be directed in the science I wished to take up . . . there was no place in the city where a man could go and get elementary training, or . . . any training at all unless he entered a regular college course. . . . Since there are many men in New York . . . placed as I was . . . [I will establish] an institution . . . open to them in the evening where they can be taught at least the rudiments of Anthropology."<sup>47</sup> With Archer Huntington's offer of a building site at Broadway and 155th Street, Heye's dream would soon become reality in New York.<sup>48</sup>

By signing the 1916 trust agreement, Heye created "a museum for the collection, preservation, study, and exhibition of all things connected with the anthropology of the aboriginal people of the North, Central,

and South Americas, and containing objects of artistic, historic, literary, and scientific interest."<sup>49</sup> That year, George Pepper wrote, "a new institution has been founded . . . whose object will be the preservation of everything pertaining to our American tribes."<sup>50</sup> Pepper placed great emphasis on systematic collecting and scholarly purpose: "[the] sole aim is to gather and to preserve for students everything useful in illustrating and elucidating the anthropology of the aborigines of the Western Hemisphere, and to disseminate by means of its publications the knowledge thereby gained."<sup>51</sup> Collections purchases and donations were justified as valuable to building the collection — bringing together "specimens that have never been duplicated" — and special emphasis was placed on organic items preserved in caves or sacred bundles.<sup>52</sup> Preservation and study were also emphasized by Heye in a 1935 letter to a Hidatsa man who requested return of a sacred bundle: "The primary object of the Museum is to preserve and to keep safely for future generations anything pertaining to the life and history of the American Indians . . . where the descendants of the old Indians, as well as students and the public, can see and study these objects of veneration, beauty and historical or scientific interest."<sup>53</sup>

Heye's work has often been explained by reference to Boas's salvage anthropology paradigm; and although Boas urged Heye to focus on salvage, Heye resisted. While preservation was important to Heye, accumulating early objects was primary. Anthropologists, including Frank Speck and Edward Sapir, who documented "memory culture" could not understand Heye's frequent disregard for recent works they offered. These pieces were contradictory to Heye's agenda — he purchased them solely to document organic items or precontact technologies. Heye seldom explained himself; and most did not recognize his interest in early Native life, perhaps best illustrated by a museum publication: "Cuba before Columbus."<sup>54</sup>

The museum's exhibits were much like those of its contemporaries. Cases focused on tribes related by geography or linguistics, such as "Central Algonkians" or the "Southern Siouan Group." The museum's entrance — representing New York — was literally a gateway to the hemisphere: mid-Atlantic tribes flanked the doorway, and visitors moved through the continents as they traveled further. Archaeology and ethnology were separated, and special cases focused on object types or tech-



nologies such as silverwork, wampum, quillwork, and “Modern Beadwork.”<sup>55</sup>

Despite the popularity of dressed mannequins and life groups at the AMNH, MAI exhibits relied on closely packed objects with few labels. Printed guidebooks provided cultural context, using present tense for Indian people and objects and past tense to describe traditional lifeways. Cultural variation was explained largely by geography and habitat. Visitors may have understood only the recent past and the more distant, “pre-historic” past as temporal frameworks.<sup>56</sup>

After its early years, the MAI suffered through the Depression, and the exhibits probably did not change significantly. Following the loss of its backers in 1928, the museum drastically cut research and publications; Heye personally supervised what entered and left the collection, filling in perceived gaps. However, the events of 1928 cost Heye and the museum much more than funding. From the beginning, Heye had relied on professional advice; but, in dismissing his staff, he lost the knowledge and manpower to organize and research collections. Academic influences on his thinking were also lost; and, as American anthropology grew by leaps and bounds, Heye continued to rely on objects as primary texts.

Where the museum once possessed a grand interpretive potential based on a massive material archive and individuals who knew what to make of it, the collection ended up an orphan. The later struggles of the MAI are well known, and in 1989 the museum—Heye’s monument—ceased to exist as the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian was born.<sup>57</sup> What lived on was the collection Heye had built, and the question has become how it can be understood as something more than a monument to one man’s work, especially when it has continually been read as a private and unexplained obsession.

#### Narratives of Nationalism: National Capital versus Cultural Capital

While Heye’s museum certainly did not support Indigenous nationalism, the NMAI implicitly encourages cultural sovereignty.<sup>58</sup> However, the NMAI’s mission effectively obscures the political ground on which the museum negotiates in serving both the American people and Native interests. Speaking about the NMAI’s 1994 opening of the George Gustav Heye

Center, Cheyenne and Arapaho filmmaker Chris Eyre puts this succinctly: “The concept of the museum is that [for] America this is *their* history, but it isn’t really, it’s Native history.”<sup>59</sup>

The debate over nationalism began not in Washington but in New York. Heye’s focus on American Indians may indicate that he felt they contributed to national character, yet he never said so. But after 1975 the MAI—or its collection—became the prize in an odd tug-of-war between the cultural capital in New York and the national capital in Washington DC. Under Roland Force’s direction, the museum sought to relocate to the U.S. Customs House near Battery Park, arguing that the collection deserved a more prominent location. Resistance by local neighbors and the mayor’s office brought competing offers from the AMNH, Oklahoma City, Las Vegas, Indianapolis, and others; but the most widely publicized came from H. Ross Perot, who offered \$70 million to move the museum to Dallas. However quickly that offer faded, it succeeded in turning up the rhetoric about the collection as a “national treasure.” New York newspapers were filled with stories, and in 1985 the United Airlines passenger magazine ran the story, “The Fight for the Greatest American Art Collection.” In 1987 the *Washington Post* published remarks by Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Daniel Inouye. The headline for Moynihan read, “Why Should New York Let the Smithsonian Abscond with It?” Inouye’s remarks were entitled, “It Belongs on the Mall, America’s Main Street.”<sup>60</sup>

With the 1989 passage of the National Museum of the American Indian Act (Public Law 105-185), the MAI collections became part of American national heritage and patrimony; its merger with the Smithsonian’s Native holdings purportedly gave “all Americans the opportunity to learn of the cultural legacy, historic grandeur, and contemporary culture of Native Americans.” In other comments, memorialization and pluralism were twin themes. In a Senate address, Inouye stated, “The time has come to honor and remember the greatness of the first Americans, their wisdom, their leadership, their valor, and their contributions to the people of the United States.” In signing the act, President George H. W. Bush remarked, “The nation will go forward with a new and richer understanding of the heritage, culture and values of the peoples of the Americas of Indian ancestry,” and the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs chairman, John

McCain, stated, "The Indian Museum will show that a dynamic, pluralistic society can celebrate distinctiveness without fostering separatism."<sup>61</sup>

Senator Moynihan may have been the only person to publicly acknowledge George Heye: "We may all anticipate the day that George Gustav Heye's gift to the world will be displayed in a manner reflective of the great and living cultures of the American Indian." Ironically, this came at the moment when "Heye's gift" joined American national heritage and the Smithsonian's national collections, known for Dorothy's ruby slippers, Archie Bunker's chair, and Fonzie's leather jacket. Still, some Native people looked to the hope that "tribal people *could* assume control of the . . . Native objects left in George Heye's rapaciously acquired collection."<sup>62</sup> The trick was how the collection could be redefined as the collective property of Native nations.

I doubt Congress foresaw growth of "a national tribal museum" from the Smithsonian transfer. What might have happened, as Paul Chaat Smith suggests, is that Indians would have been "explained and accounted for, and somehow fit into the creation myth of the most powerful, benevolent nation ever."<sup>63</sup> However, discussions of the collection's potential Native repossession began in the 1980s, when then MAI's Native trustees—including Vine Deloria and Suzan Shown Harjo—began to talk about the collection as "an irreplaceable heritage." Speaking to the board in 1984, Deloria said, "This is a struggle to control our collection." Lloyd Kiva New stated, "No matter what you do, just take care of the collection. It is our Fort Knox."<sup>64</sup> Discourse on control continued throughout the Smithsonian transfer and into debates over the NMAI's 1991 repatriation policy, which was read as indicating that collections were the "sole property" of affiliated tribes. This was clarified to cover only items successfully claimed for repatriation, but the discussions threw light on what Native control meant to different constituencies.<sup>65</sup>

#### *Cultural Sovereignty and Indigenous Nationalism at the National Museum of the American Indian*

By 1994, with the opening of the George Gustav Heye Center, Native voice had become the NMAI's leading trope for exhibit practice. In an accompanying book, one author wrote, "Much has been written about us from the perspective of the outsider, but our own story—written by our own

people with an inside perspective—remains to be told."<sup>66</sup> Since then, Native voice—allowing Indigenous people to "show and tell the world who we are and to use our own voices in the telling"—has been the NMAI's primary means of assuring cultural sovereignty.<sup>67</sup>

At the same time, the NMAI addressed Native ambivalence over museum possession of Native objects. As Rick West states, "There was . . . this historic love/hate relationship between museums and Native communities. We . . . value them . . . because they have our stuff, and we hate them because they have our stuff."<sup>68</sup> Indian visitors to the collections grudgingly acknowledge that without George Heye's interference many objects would now be lost. Delaware Grand Chief Linda Poolaw notes, "If . . . Heye hadn't collected those things back then, we would not have them today. . . . Over 100 years later, my people can see what we had."<sup>69</sup> By soliciting recommendations about care of collections and their movement from New York to Washington, the NMAI extended the bounds of tribal sovereignty over the collections as a "moral and ethical responsibility."<sup>70</sup>

Beyond work on exhibitions and collections, others see the NMAI's very existence as Native cultural sovereignty. Amanda Cobb suggests that the National Museum of the American Indian Act symbolizes Native cultural resurgence and has given it greater visibility. She calls the act significant because museums' representations of Native people have seldom been recognized as colonial forces, noting that the NMAI's importance lies in the fact that "Native Americans have *again* turned an instrument of colonization and dispossession . . . into an instrument of self-definition and cultural continuance."<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, a few things remain to be said about the problems and prospects of cultural sovereignty as it might be expressed within the NMAI or any other museum.

First, we must question whether creating a separate Indian museum at the Smithsonian embodies essentialism.<sup>72</sup> Like the planned National Museum of African American History and Culture, the NMAI provides a "separate but equal" place for telling American history outside the national museum that is dedicated to that purpose. Yet visitors probably do not expect a big dose of American history to be taught at the NMAI any more than they expect it at the National Air and Space Museum: each Smithsonian museum is constituted by *subject matter* and is not intended as a place for perspective-based history. And, if the NMAI is seen as a sub-

ject-matter museum, the public expects that subject to be Native culture, with the emphasis on the singular, rather than on plural cultures.

Tony Bennett has suggested that what is perceived as national heritage is universally supported, and the adoption of the NMAI into the Smithsonian family has ironically made it part of American national patrimony.<sup>73</sup> But this does not account for how Americans—Native and non-Native—look to the NMAI to support their perspectives on Indian people and culture. Bennett also suggests that museums run the risk of creating an image of the past as counterpoint to and retreat from the present. The NMAI wants to become an “international center that represents the totality of Native experiences,” focusing on living people and cultures; but that does not deter visitors’ perceptions of NMAI collections as images of the frozen past, sources of nostalgia, or resources for the future.<sup>74</sup> The extent to which the NMAI serves those seeking an essentialist, “spiritual” alternative to contemporary crises of personal identity, family life, and environmental degradation only reinforces a newer but still potentially treacherous master narrative.<sup>75</sup>

In presenting living cultures, the NMAI rests too often on working with “traditional elders” to illustrate how traditional culture is lived today, resulting in an uncomfortable nostalgia that implies that Native people live only through reference to tradition and must constantly explain how their present-day lives remain traditional.<sup>76</sup> This is far from how many Native people, especially those who do not call themselves “traditional,” want to think about the present and the future of cultural sovereignty, regardless of objects or museums. If the NMAI is to successfully combat the misperception that it only narrates the past, I suspect it needs to engage with those who are revolutionizing diverse bodies of scholarship, reclaiming them, and making them relevant to the Native present and future through Native intellectual sovereignty.<sup>77</sup>

Jacki Thompson Rand has recently spoken about how early dominance by male Native artists has left a mark on the NMAI by privileging art and material culture.<sup>78</sup> Though I agree with Rand, I believe the larger issue for museums’ problematic reliance on material culture may be Native scholars’ own neglect of visual culture. Museums have long created flawed images of Native cultures; but most Native scholars have—like early twentieth-century anthropology—abandoned museums, seeking the more

visible and potentially independent university atmosphere.<sup>79</sup> I recognize that museums—aimed at the public—remain marginal to intellectual life, but they do retain considerable power and can be valuable to increasing understanding of cultural sovereignty. While contemporary Native artists and photographers have reinterpreted art, objects, and images in the name of cultural sovereignty, the greatest intellectual attention paid to material culture is often for repatriation—the literal rather than the symbolic repossession of what museums hold.<sup>80</sup>

My point here is not to criticize Native scholars for lack of involvement in museums but to ask why. If sovereignty, as Scott Lyons suggests, is the “strategy by which we aim to best recover our losses from the ravages of colonization” and Native communication and resistance have always taken textual and nontextual forms, why has reinterpretation and repossession of visual culture fallen so far behind writing in Native self-representation? One difficulty may be that what museums ask of Native people is often a literal reading of objects, hence museums’ recourse to elders whose traditional knowledge is expected to provide a Rosetta stone.<sup>81</sup> While such readings may sometimes suffice, they cannot substitute for recontextualizations supplied by Native scholars working across disciplines, such as reading and writing history through art.<sup>82</sup>

### What Next?

Returning to George Heye, we must still question whether the collection he built can serve Native cultural sovereignty at the NMAI or elsewhere. As I have suggested, Native ambivalence about museums has many sources, including possession of what once was theirs. However, as an anonymous member of a Native consultation, which was held during early architectural program meetings for the NMAI, once stated, “My grandparents were my collection.”<sup>83</sup> This quote suggests that museums’ dependence on material culture continues to reduce Native culture to its physical products, often permanently separated from related knowledge. To better serve its Native and non-Native constituencies, the NMAI plans to develop its collections by moving away from physical objects and toward documentation of intangible culture, both associated with physical objects and as separate expressions. Without this step, the NMAI can never begin to

represent Native experiences and serve Native communities in ways they themselves define.<sup>84</sup>

But we must also recognize the prospects and limitations of the collection George Heye built and of the objects subsequently acquired by the MAI and the NMAI. Despite the NMAI's plans to expand what it considers collections, the collection is what it is for the moment; and many will not find the right materials and texts to carry out cultural sovereignty projects. Only time will tell whether sufficient building blocks exist for work that Native people want to do in museums. Heye's interest in documenting the precontact Native past has left an indelible mark, both in how objects were removed from Native hands and, because deposition in museums has authenticated these objects as "typical," "proper," or "the best," freezing images of Native culture that retain their potency for consumption and replication. This is a problem for all museums, whose origins in collecting Western civilization's antiquities still frame a perception that everything and everybody represented in museums are equally antique.<sup>85</sup> The NMAI's attempt to move from the classical museum to a place of living people and cultures requires changing a global mind-set on both public and academic levels.

Future use of collections and resources can only succeed when collections are understood as the selectively accumulated and reified products of outsiders' perceptions. The ideological burdens that museum objects carry, whether cultural, institutional, or personal, must be understood; and there is still considerable work needed to answer the question posed by Patricia Penn Hilden and Shari Huhndorf: "How did these objects climb into their glass case in the National Museum of the American Indian?" From that point forward, cultural studies can then deal with material culture as just one kind of text for intellectual and cultural sovereignty projects, including the strategically anticolonial and overtly nationalistic as well as those focused on the future rather than the past. Lloyd Kiva New articulated this while pondering the value of the NMAI collections: "I began to wonder what . . . [the NMAI] could do. . . . While I agreed with . . . preservation of Indian culture, I hoped . . . this did not mean some kind of cultural embalming process wherein obsolete cultural ways are kept going beyond their time. . . . 'Conservation' or 'preservation' means

that the museum should take impeccable care of patrimonial objects in its collection. But a more important task should be . . . using the objects . . . to help Indian culture develop new ways to respond to the dynamics of an ever-changing social environment."<sup>86</sup>

From his perspective as an artist, Lloyd New saw beyond current readings of Native objects as art. While potentially useful to tribal national pride, transformation of ethnological and archaeological objects from artifact to art remains problematic. Their elevation may have increased respect for Native artistry, but it also promises to strip objects of cultural contexts and continues to privilege physical over intangible cultural expressions. Introduction of Native objects into art worlds has simultaneously elevated their status as desirable commodities, again emphasizing material and commercial value and potentially encouraging neo-imperial collection and consumption of objects and the people they metonymically represent.<sup>87</sup>

I am not suggesting that aesthetics are not part of the picture; aesthetics are still how collectors and museums often see objects. George Heye was no exception; although he did not consider objects as art, he privileged some objects as "fine examples."<sup>88</sup> Ruth Phillips calls this Heye's "privileging of rarity and age," but this perception of the collections and Heye's work results from how the MAI and the NMAI have historically overemphasized "masterworks" at the expense of other aspects of the collection and emphasized art rather than culture or history. Since 1970 approximately 8,500 objects have been published or exhibited, often three or four times; and this does not include loans of these same "masterpieces" to other institutions. What of the quarter-million other objects, including 568 items simply identified as "stick" in the NMAI's collections? These items of everyday life do not feed anyone's wonderful master narrative of Native life. But they are important, and their preponderance indicates they were equally important to George Heye. Although he probably loved those masterpieces, he also appreciated things that other collectors and museums ignored, including those 568 sticks.<sup>89</sup> The collection's strength grew from Heye's interest in materials that escaped archaeological preservation and other collectors' notice, but it has been dismissed by the boxcar-collector metaphor and by the misrepresentations of his intent, which has been read as simply amassing a huge collection.

Research for this essay was completed in 2007, the fiftieth anniversary of George Heye's death; and the intervening years have not been kind to his legacy. As I have suggested, the NMAI has seen fit to emphasize and magnify his role as a collector, masking him and his intent in a cloak of insanity and consumption. Ultimately, Heye's image has been so thoroughly wrapped and packed that he is no longer perceived as anything but a man who was singularly obsessed with the simple desire to collect and possess Indian stuff. He is not remembered as a man who funded countless expeditions and excavations, who funded research and publications, or who assembled a professional staff the likes of which few museums have ever seen. Most of all, he is not remembered as a man who built a museum that rivaled its contemporaries in scope and scholarly production. The NMAI's own origin story can seldom admit that it grew out of that other museum—the MAI—or that the collection results not from the “boxcar” metaphor but from a definitive intellectual basis and how it was carried out. George Heye the museum founder cannot be a culture hero in the NMAI story because it is easier for many to deal with him as “just a crazy white man.” Simultaneously, systematic erasure of Heye's purpose and intent in assembling a collection and founding the MAI has allowed the NMAI to create a new, ahistoric foundation for the collection that rests on a belief that Heye's expansive collecting encompassed everything rather than the very specific interests he developed for sixty years. Contrary to this trajectory, I believe that interpreting NMAI collections cannot proceed without understanding George Heye, and that it is time to tell better-informed stories of Heye's life's work and its impact on the museum's past, present, and future.

## Notes

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with Paul Chaat Smith. I also owe thanks to Lisa M. King for discussions on rhetorical sovereignty and for introducing me to its literature and to Kylie Message for her suggestion that I look to the history of the Frederick Horniman collection and museum for parallels with George Heye's life. For their comments on this paper or discussions on its substance, I thank Bruce Bernstein, Ruth Phillips, and Ira Jacknis.

1. For characterizations of Heye, see Jerry Reynolds, “The Struggle to Save the Heye Collection,” *Indian Country Today*, September 18, 2004, <http://www.indiancountry.com/content.cfm?id=1095516461>; and Francis X. Clines, “The American Tribes Prepare Their National Showcase,” *New York Times*, March 28, 2004, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A03EFD81030F93BA15750C0A9629C8B63>. Richard F. Kessler, “A New Museum, an Ancient Heritage,” *Washington Post*, September 18, 2004; this article referred to an earlier piece by Jackie Trescott, “History's New Look: At the Indian Museum, a Past without Pedestals,” *Washington Post*, September 13, 2004. For the NMAI's 2004 press release, see NMAI, “George Gustav Heye: Founder of the Museum of the American Indian (1916) in New York City,” [http://www.nmai.si.edu/press/releases/09-16-04\\_hey\\_e\\_biography.pdf](http://www.nmai.si.edu/press/releases/09-16-04_hey_e_biography.pdf).
2. Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 122.
3. Eric Hobsbawm, “Inventing Traditions,” introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.
4. NMAI, *Intellectual Framework for the Collections and Collecting Plan*, adopted by NMAI Board of Trustees, October 2006; and NMAI, *Scope of Collections Description*, 2007.
5. Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); and Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1995); James Clifford, “Objects and Selves” afterword to *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. George W. Stocking Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 236–46.
6. George W. Stocking Jr., “Essays on Museums and Material Culture,” in Stocking Jr., *Objects and Others*, 3–14.
7. Anthony Shelton, “The Return of the Subject,” introduction to *Collectors: Expressions of Self and Other*, ed. Anthony Shelton (London: Horniman Museum and Gardens; Coimbra: Museu Antropológico da Universidade de Coimbra, 2001), 11–22; Clifford, “Objects and Selves.”
8. Jean Baudrillard, “The System of Collecting,” trans. John Cardinal, in *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), 7–24. On the sexual aspects of collecting, see Werner Muensterberger, *Collecting:*

- An Unruly Passion; Psychological Perspectives* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1994).
9. Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections*; and Brian Durrans, "Collecting the Self in the Idiom of Science: Charles Hose and the Ethnography of Sarawak," in *Collectors: Individuals and Institutions*, ed. Anthony Shelton (London: Horniman Museum and Gardens; Coimbra: Museu Antropológico da Universidade de Coimbra, 2001), 189–201.
  10. Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism: Material Culture and Colonial Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), xix.
  11. American museums' collections often include masses of weapons collected during American military campaigns, almost to the exclusion of other items from conquered peoples. For instance, some American Plains and Philippines collections are almost entirely weaponry—clubs, bows and arrows, and bladed weapons—and represent the literal disarming of Indigenous people during the Indian Wars and the Spanish-American War. On museums' simultaneous presentation of others and colonial rule or hegemony, see Aldona Jonaitis, "Franz Boas, John Swanton, and the New Haida Sculpture at the American Museum of Natural History," in *The Early Years of Native American Art History*, ed. Janet Catherine Berlo (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 22–61.
  12. On world's fairs and Wild West shows, see Burton Benedict, "The Anthropology of World's Fairs," in *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915*, ed. Burton Benedict (Berkeley CA: Lowie Museum of Anthropology, 1983), 1–65; L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883–1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); and Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). For relations between museums and travel writing, see Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992); and David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1993). On museums and representations of the past, see David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Ann McMullen, "Relevance and Reflexivity: The Past and the Present in Museums" (unpublished manuscript, 2006).
  13. On temporal distancing, see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). For the role of anthropology and primitive art collecting in museum representations, see Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, "Our (Museum) World Turned Upside Down: Re-presenting Native American Arts," *Art Bulletin* 77, no. 1 (1995): 6–10; Jonaitis, "Franz Boas, John Swanton, and the New Haida Sculpture"; and Christina F. Kreps, *Liberating Cultures: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation and Heritage Preservation* (London: Routledge, 2003).
  14. W. Richard West Jr., "Museums and Native America: The New Collaboration," (paper, presented at the International Council of Museums–Germany conference, Berlin, November 2003), [http://icom-deutschland.de/docs/washington\\_west.pdf](http://icom-deutschland.de/docs/washington_west.pdf). Art museums' inclusion of Native objects came with the 1930 Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts and the 1941 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. Both exhibitions included objects borrowed from Heye's MAI. See John Sloan and Oliver LaFarge, *Introduction to American Indian Art* (New York: Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts, 1931); and Frederic H. Douglas and Rene D'Harnoncourt, *Indian Art of the United States* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1941).
  15. Ruth B. Phillips, "Why Not Tourist Art? Significant Silences in Native American Museum Representations," in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 115. On museums, colonial collecting, and nostalgia, see Margaret Dubin, "Native American Imitation and the Spurious Canon of the 'Of-and-By,'" *Visual Anthropology Review* 15, no. 1 (1999): 70–74; and Margaret Dubin, *Native America Collected: The Culture of an Art World* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001).
  16. On anthropology's withdrawal from museums, see Stocking, "Essays on Museums and Material Culture"; and Ira Jacknis, "Franz Boas and Exhibits: On the Limitations of the Museum Method of Anthropology," in Stocking Jr., *Objects and Others*, 75–111. On objects and representation, see Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections*; and Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876–1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Mason is cited in Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 9. Speaking about the peoples of the Americas, George H. Pepper (George Heye's right-hand man) states, "Having no written language, [they] left no records that can be woven into a consecutive story. . . . The student must evolve the story of the various prehistoric tribes from what they have left behind them." George H. Pepper, "The Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation," *Geographical Review* 2, no. 6 (1916): 405–6.
  17. J. Alden Mason, "George G. Heye, 1874–1957," *Leaflets of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation* 6 (1958): 11. It is difficult to know what Heye read at this early point, but by 1904 he was said to have purchased the anthropological publications of the AMNH and was interested in those of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard. George Pepper to Frederick Ward Putnam, June 19, 1904, NMAI Archives, box 0087, folder 11. Notably, he does not

appear to have succumbed to romantic notions about Indian people such as the “myth of the Mound Builders” and instead probably concentrated on up-to-date scientific-anthropology literature. For more on that myth, see Robert Silverberg, *Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1968); and Conn, *History's Shadow*.

18. Bruce Bernstein has noted that Heye's use of three-by-five-inch cards, like those used in library card catalogs, was a distinctly modern museum development. Bruce Bernstein, e-mail message to author, October 9, 2007. In the late nineteenth century, most museums used large-format, bound ledgers for cataloging. While a few museums have retained this system (or have kept it only for recording accessions), others switched to the complete use of cards or used cards as an adjunct to ledger-book cataloging. Heye's use of cards rather than a ledger may have had instrumental purposes: it is easier to delete an object or recatalog objects using a card system. Duplicate sets of cards can also be arranged according to category or geography, thus allowing a particular aspect of the collection to be seen at a glance; but there is no evidence that Heye did this. His motivations for using cards rather than a ledger for cataloging remain unclear. For early professional museum discussions on accession—and catalog-card systems, see *Proceedings of the American Association of Museums*, Records of the Sixth Annual Meeting Held at Boston, Massachusetts, May 23–25, 1911 (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1911), 31–42.
19. These included the Hispanic Society of America, the American Geographical Society, the American Numismatics Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
20. This summary of Heye's life is based on the professional obituaries J. Alden Mason, “George G. Heye, 1874–1957”; and Samuel K. Lothrop, “George Gustav Heye, 1874–1956,” *American Antiquity* 23, no. 1 (1957): 66–67, which agree on all major facts of Heye's life. The figure of \$10 million for Heye's inheritance comes from a more informal article, Kevin Wallace, “Slim-Shin's Monument,” *New Yorker*, November 19, 1960. Figures for collections totals are derived from the NMAI's *Scope of Collections Description* and were calculated using the museum's computerized collections database. The NMAI's current object holdings are estimated at 266,000 catalog records, representing 825,000 items. Each catalog number may represent a single object or thousands of beads, hence the difference in the totals.
21. Mason, “George G. Heye, 1874–1957,” 11; Lothrop, “George Gustav Heye, 1874–1956,” 66.
22. E. K. Burnett, “Recollections of E. K. Burnett” (transcripts of tapes, 1964), NMAI Archives, box vw, folder 13.
23. Edmund Carpenter identifies the anonymous professor—who provided this and other quotes in Wallace, “Slim-Shin's Monument”—as anthropologist Junius Bird, who participated in expeditions funded by Heye and, after 1931, was curator of South American archaeology at AMNH. See Edmund S. Carpenter, “9/3428: Three

Chapters from an Unfinished, Two-Volume Study of George Heye's Museum of the American Indian,” *European Review of Native American Studies* 15, no. 1 (2001): 1–12; and Edmund S. Carpenter, *Two Essays: Chief & Greed* (North Andover MA: Persimmon Press, 2005). Bird's animosity may stem from the fact that he was among those dismissed when the MAI lost funding after 1928 and that Heye chose to invest remaining funds largely in continued collections purchases rather than in staffing or expeditions. However, Bird was part of an MAI-funded expedition to Greenland in 1930.

24. Wallace, “Slim-Shin's Monument.” Some sources suggest that Heye created the MAI as a tax shelter, but I can find no basis for this conclusion.
25. Frederick J. Dockstader, *Indian Art of the Americas* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1973); and Frederick J. Dockstader, introduction to *Masterworks from the Museum of the American Indian* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973), 10.
26. Anna Curtenius Roosevelt and James G. E. Smith, eds., *The Ancestors: Native Artisans of the Americas* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1979); U. Vincent Wilcox, “The Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation,” *American Indian Art Magazine* 3, no. 2 (1978): 40; Roland W. Force, *The Heye and the Mighty: Politics and the Museum of the American Indian* (Honolulu HI: Mechas Press, 1999), 3–4.
27. Tom Hill, “A Backward Glimpse through the Museum Door,” introduction to *Creation's Journey: Native American Identity and Belief*, ed. Tom Hill and Richard W. Hill Sr. (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press), 19; Natasha Bonilla Martinez, “An Indian Americas: NMAI Photographic Archive Documents Indian Peoples of the Western Hemisphere,” in *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 29. Later exhibitions at the Heye Center do not mention Heye except to note that specific items were purchased by him; see Joseph D. Horse Capture and George P. Horse Capture, *Beauty, Honor, and Tradition: The Legacy of Plains Indian Shirts* (Washington DC: National Museum of the American Indian, 2001). In beginning this research, I suspected NMAI rhetoric would differ depending on whether New York or national audiences were addressed. However, available documents indicated only slight differences. Texts for national consumption focus on the NMAI as a Native place emphasizing Native voice while those intended for New York audiences focus on the city as a cultural capital, a Native place (contrasted with Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and diverse ethnic neighborhoods), and a center of intercultural world commerce; see John Haworth, “New York City in Indian Possession: The George Gustav Heye Center,” in *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Duane Blue Spruce (Washington DC: National Museum of the American Indian, 2004), 133–49; and Gabrielle Tayac, “From the Deep: Native Layers of



- New York City," in *New Tribe New York: The Urban Vision Quest*, ed. Gerald McMaster (Washington DC: National Museum of the American Indian, 2005), 12–19. The old MAI is now often described in terms of New Yorkers' fond memories of its crammed cases, and they are said to sorely miss the presence of Heye's collection and look forward to its return to New York in planned exhibitions. Some NMAI staff at the GGHC use the word *repatriation* to refer to use of the collections—permanently housed in Suitland, Maryland—in New York-based exhibits and make the rather unlikely suggestion that the MAI and its collections figure as largely in New Yorkers' cultural consciousness as the more iconic American Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, or the Museum of Modern Art.
28. Clara Sue Kidwell, "Every Last Dishcloth: The Prodigious Collecting of George Gustav Heye," in *Collecting Native America: 1870–1960*, ed. Shepard Krech III and Barbara A. Hail (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 237. In 1917 MAI fieldworker Donald Cadzow recorded what he called Heye's "Golden Rule": "Every object collected add field tag/ Material must be old/Hunting outfits/fishing outfits/costumes/masks and ceremonial objects, also dance objects/household utensils particularly stone and pottery dishes and lamps/Talismans, hunting charms, all ivory carvings (old)/NO TOURIST MATERIAL." Field notes by Donald Cadzow, 1917, NMAI Archives, box OC24, folder 22. Although many stress this aspect of Heye's collecting, early twentieth-century anthropologists and the large museums that purchased their collections maintained the same attitudes, privileging earlier works over more recent pieces, including "crafts" made for sale; see Phillips, "Why Not Tourist Art?"
  29. Lawrence M. Small, "A Passionate Collector," *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 2000, [http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/small\\_nov00.html](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/small_nov00.html). The Smithsonian accepted the personal collections of Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919), Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (1913–1987), and Joseph H. Hirshhorn (1899–1981) and made them into separate Smithsonian museums that include their names, but these benefactors have never been spoken of as Heye has been. Origins of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art in the personal collection of Warren H. Robbins and his Museum of African Art are almost completely invisible; see Smithsonian Institution Archives, "Histories of the Smithsonian Institution's Museums and Research Centers," Smithsonian Institution, <http://siarchives.si.edu/history/exhibits/historic/history.htm>.
  30. West, "Museums and Native America"; and James Pepper Henry, "Challenges in Managing Culturally Sensitive Collections at the National Museum of the American Indian," in *Stewards of the Sacred*, ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan and Alison Edwards (Washington DC: American Association of Museums, 2004), 105–12.
  31. Bruce Bernstein, "The National Museum of the American Indian Collections," *American Indian Art Magazine* 29, no. 4 (2004): 52–55; Douglas E. Evelyn, "The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian: An International Institution of Living Cultures," *The Public Historian* 28, no. 2 (2006): 50–55; and Liz Hill, "A Home for the Collections: The Cultural Resources Center," in Blue Spruce, *Spirit of a Native Place*, 117–31. By now, readers should recognize "boxcar" as a theme. However, no MAI employee ever mentioned collections being shipped from the field in boxcars, and I doubt it ever occurred. However, after Wallace's anonymous professor characterized Heye as "what we call a boxcar collector," the phrase has been repeated so often that it has taken on the flavor of fact, as evidenced in NMAI director Rick West's quote.
  32. Mary Jane Lenz, "George Gustav Heye: The Museum of the American Indian," in Blue Spruce, *Spirit of a Native Place*, 99, 115; and Gerald McMaster and Clifford M. Trafzer, *Native Universes: Voices of Indian America* (Washington DC: National Museum of the American Indian, 2004).
  33. Elsewhere, Patricia Hilden has suggested that the NMAI is extremely protective of its image. Hilden observes that negative feedback on exhibits and programs were quickly removed from comment books left to gather visitor responses, leaving only positive comments for visitors to read before adding their own. Patricia Hilden, "Race for Sale: Narratives of Possession in Two 'Ethnic' Museums," *The Drama Review* 44, no. 3 (2000): 3317, <http://www.csun.edu/~vcspcoog/603/raceforsale.pdf>.
  34. Drawing on Heye's obituary, Mason, and Wallace, the NMAI biography of Heye also recounts the MAI's 1938 return of a Hidatsa sacred bundle, calling it "an unknown predicator of the repatriation section of the legislation establishing the National Museum of the American Indian"; NMAI, "George Gustav Heye." See also "George Heye Dies: Museum Founder—Authority on Indian Tribes Endowed a Foundation for Scientific Collections," *New York Times*, January 21, 1957; Mason, "George G. Heye, 1874–1957"; Wallace, "Slim-Shin's Monument." As Ira Jacknis suggests, this event was "not what it appeared to be." Ira Jacknis, "A New Thing? The NMAI in Historical and Institutional Perspective," in "Critical Engagements with the National Museum of the American Indian," ed. Amy Lonetree and Sonya Atalay, special issue, *American Indian Quarterly* 30, nos. 3–4 (2006): 533. Kidwell further suggests that Heye's agreement to return the bundle was a public relations ploy, and Carpenter indicates that the publicity angle was suggested by none other than John Collier. Kidwell, "Every Last Dishcloth"; and Carpenter, *Two Essays*, 105. The museum's board stated, "This is in no way a recognition on our part of any legal or moral obligation to return the bundle." Carpenter, *Two Essays*, 106.
  35. Though NMAI director W. Richard West Jr. is often referred to as its "founding director," this tends to erase the MAI and its museum functions as the NMAI's predecessor and George Heye as that museum's founding director.
  36. Richard West, "Native Treasures," interview by Jeffrey Brown, *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, September 21, 2004, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/>



- july-deco4/museum\_9-21.html; Reynolds, "Struggle to Save the Heye Collection"; Ellen Herscher, "A Museum to Right Past Wrongs," *Archaeology*, December 6, 1999, <http://www.archaeology.org/online/features/amindian/index.html>; and Clines, "American Tribes Prepare Their National Showcase," and see also Kidwell, "Every Last Dishcloth." Press coverage was voluminous and repeated many of the same themes and phrases. See also Francis X. Clines, "A Gathering of Treasures and Tribes," *New York Times*, March 27, 2000, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A04E4DC113DF934A15750CoA9669C8B63>; Herman Lebovics, "Post-Colonial Museums: How the French and American Models Differ," *History News Network*, September 13, 2004, <http://hnn.us/articles/6939.html>; Judy Nichols, "Sharing Tradition with the World," *Arizona Republic*, September 18, 2004; Elizabeth Olson, "A Museum of Indians That Is Also for Them," *New York Times*, August 29, 2004, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9500E0D7113FF93AA2575BCoA9629C8B63>; John Roach, "At New American Indian Museum, Artifacts Are 'Alive,'" *National Geographic News*, September 21, 2004, [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/09/0914\\_040913\\_indians\\_exhibits.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/09/0914_040913_indians_exhibits.html); and Lyric Wallwork Winik, "To Reconcile a Tragic Past," *Parade Magazine*, September 5, 2004.
37. Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 216; and Berlo and Phillips, "Our (Museum) World," 7.
38. James E. Snead, "Science, Commerce, and Control: Patronage and the Development of Anthropological Archaeology in the Americas," *American Anthropologist* 101, no. 2 (1999): 264.
39. Jacknis, "A New Thing?," 516; Cole, *Captured Heritage*, 217. On the inflation of the collection's size, see Hilden, "Race for Sale"; Patricia Penn Hilden and Shari M. Huhndorf, "Performing 'Indian' in the National Museum of the American Indian," *Social Identities* 5, no. 2 (1999): 161–83; and Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
40. Edmund Carpenter, who has examined Heye's life and motives, denies that much of the collection was stolen from Native owners: "Such pieces exist, of course, but are much rarer than one might suppose. . . . There are certainly stolen objects in the Heye collection, but I know of none stolen from Indians. Stealing from reservations just wasn't George Heye's style. He loved to acquire in bulk, and that meant from existing collections. Above all, he loved to buy and sell." Carpenter, "9/3428," 15.
41. Freud suggests that fetishistic collecting resulted from the redirection of surplus libido; and since Heye was said to be a man of appetites, fetishism may be a possible explanation. Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections*. On the other hand, Roy Ellen suggests that fetishists transform persons or social relations into objects to control them, and Heye's perceived disinterest in living Indians may rule out true fetishism. Roy Ellen, "Fetishism," *Man* 23, no 2. (1988): 213–35. For other studies on collectors and collecting, see Pearce, *On Collecting*; Muensterberger, *Collecting*; and John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, eds., *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1994).
42. True collectors are defined by their vision of what a complete collection might be; their enjoyment in building, ordering, and classifying their collections; and their understanding of how items fit into the whole. On Heye's attitudes toward his collection, see Lothrop, "George Gustav Heye, 1874–1956"; Mason, "George G. Heye, 1874–1957"; Burnett, "Recollections of E. K. Burnett"; Wallace, "Slim-Shin's Monument"; and Force, *Heye and the Mighty*. For collectors' visions, see Pearce *Museums, Objects, and Collections*; and Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, and the Collection* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1993).
43. Shepard Krech III, introduction to Krech and Hail, *Collecting Native America*, 10. Horniman began collecting in the 1860s, filling his house and opening it to the public and, in 1901, opening a separate building. Pitt Rivers's life closely resembles Heye's. Beginning somewhat modestly, the collections of Pitt Rivers and Heye both grew rapidly following inheritances, and both men sought alliances with existing museums but wanted independence and hired their own staff. Heye, Horniman, and Pitt Rivers all began by buying individual items and later focused on purchasing many large collections that had been made by others. On Frederick John Horniman, see Ken Teague, "In the Shadow of the Palace: Frederick J. Horniman and His Collection," in Shelton, *Collectors: Expressions of Self and Other*, 111–36; and Anthony Shelton, "Rational Passions: Frederick John Horniman and Institutional Collections," in Shelton, *Collectors: Expressions of Self and Other*, 205–24. On Pitt Rivers, see William Ryan Chapman, "Arranging Ethnology: A. H. L. F. Pitt Rivers and the Typological School," in Stocking Jr., *Objects and Others*, 15–48.
44. Purchase of the southwestern ceramic collection from Henry Hales – and creation of the catalog – was prompted by anthropologists George Pepper and Marshall Saville. Jacknis also recognizes purchase of the Hales collection and the beginning of the catalog as significant to Heye's move from private to systematic collection. The value Heye placed on the Hales collection is indicated by the fact that the first object in the catalog is from that collection and not the Navajo shirt that began his personal collection. See Kidwell, "Every Last Dishcloth"; Lenz, "George Gustav Heye"; and Jacknis, "A New Thing?" In 1916 George Pepper indicated that Heye had become serious about a museum fifteen years earlier, and Force cites correspondence between Heye and Huntington. See Pepper, "Museum of the American Indian"; and Force, *Heye and the Mighty*. On Heye's Latin American research, see Carpenter, *Two Essays*; Pepper, "Museum of the American In-

- dian"; MAI, "Aims and Objects of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation," *Indian Notes and Monographs* 33 (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1922); Kidwell, "Every Last Dishcloth"; and Jacknis, "A New Thing?"
45. In 1908 George Gordon of the University Museum agreed to house and exhibit Heye's collection. Until 1916 Heye served on the University Museum board and funded North American expeditions and excavations. Despite the fact that the work was done under the auspices of the University Museum and potentially to benefit it, the materials collected were cataloged using Heye's numbering system rather than Penn's, which suggests that Heye never intended to merge his collection with the University Museum. Heye collections were withdrawn and moved to New York after 1916. See "Scientific News and Notes," *Science* 29, no. 736 (1909): 225; Carpenter, *Two Essays*; Kidwell, "Every Last Dishcloth"; Force, *The Heye and the Mighty*; and Lucy Fowler Williams, *Guide to the North American Ethnographic Collections at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2002).
46. See Conn, *History's Shadow*; Snead, "Science, Commerce, and Control"; Williams, *Guide to the North American Ethnographic Collections*; Jacknis, "A New Thing?"; and Jonaitis, "Franz Boas, John Swanton, and the New Haida Sculpture." The Brooklyn Museum may have competed with the AMNH and Heye, but it maintained an ethnographic art focus and lacked Heye's resources. Diana Fane, "New Questions for 'Old Things': The Brooklyn Museum's Zuni Collection," in Berlo, *Early Years of Native American Art History*, 62–87. The *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* between 1907 (the series' inception) and 1916 indicate ethnographic and ethnological emphasis over archaeology.
47. Kidwell, "Every Last Dishcloth," 243. Heye maintained a penchant for hiring non-academics, like himself, as well as individuals outside his own class, potentially avoiding an ivory-tower mentality or simply hiring those he liked. Before the Bronx Annex was built, staff members were divided between "upstairs" and "downstairs." George Heye, Frank Utley, Jesse Nusbaum, William C. Orchard (an English artist and formerly an AMNH prep rator), Edwin F. Coffin (a former race-car driver), Charles Turbyfill (a livery stable worker picked up during the Nacoochee Mound excavations), Amos Oneroad (A. B. Skinner's Dakota informant and driver), Donald Cadzow, and Foster Saville (Marshall's brother) were upstairs; more academic types were downstairs: Frederick Webb Hodge (formerly chief ethnologist at the Bureau of American Ethnology), Marshall Saville (first curator of Mexican and Central American Archaeology at the AMNH and later at Columbia), George H. Pepper (AMNH), Alanson B. Skinner (Columbia, Harvard, and AMNH), and Mark Raymond Harrington (AMNH and Columbia). On MAI employees, see Carpenter, *Two Essays*; Kidwell, "Every Last Dishcloth"; Jacknis, "A New Thing?"; and Mark Raymond Harrington, "Memories of My Work with George G. Heye," n.d., NMAI Archives, box OC 79, folder 5. We should also remember that the MAI had no women as professional staff members and, as a workplace, seems to have resembled a private men's club. This air of masculinity may have been a sign of the times, but it may also have encouraged focus on "old Indians" who—as warriors—were male as well as a lack of attention on later works, including commercial crafts made by women. Phillips, "Why Not Tourist Art?" On anthropologists' interest in men's objects versus collectors' interest in those made by women, see Marvin Cohodas, "Louisa Keyser and the Cohns: Mythmaking and Basket Making in the American West," in Berlo, *Early Years of Native American Art History*, 88–133.
48. Serving New York was important, both for Heye and others. The AMNH was built by those who wanted to "bring glory to their city," including Collis Huntington and his son Archer, who supported Heye and his museum; see Jacknis, "Franz Boas and Exhibits." Collections exchanges between Heye or MAI and New York museums—such as AMNH and the Brooklyn Museum—were rarer than those with other institutions. Carpenter suggests that AMNH and George Heye made many exchanges, but these occurred largely around 1905. Likewise, Brooklyn Museum exchanges with MAI occurred only during Dockstader's tenure. For public auctions, Heye and the Brooklyn Museum, AMNH, and the University Museum were said to avoid competition; see Carpenter, *Two Essays*; and Burnett, "Recollections of E. K. Burnett." I suspect that Heye's goal was to bring collections to New York; he did not feel compelled to secure objects from New York museums for the sake of adding them to MAI.
49. Force, *Heye and the Mighty*, 10.
50. Pepper "Museum of the American Indian," 401.
51. Pepper "Museum of the American Indian," 415. Pepper reiterates the public emphasis of the museum, stating, "The founding of the Museum of the American Indian marks the end of personal effort and opens up a broad field wherein all who are interested in the American Indian can work," and "from a private undertaking, superintended and financed by an individual, it has become a great public benefaction—a benefaction that needs the assistance of all who are interested in the preservation of material that will help . . . better understanding of the primitive tribes of the two Americas." Pepper, "Museum of the American Indian," 416, 418.
52. MAI, "Aims and Objects," 3. Publications that were funded by Heye before MAI's creation—such as this one, from which this section takes its name—were subsequently reprinted by the museum, reinforcing perception of the museum's scholarly contributions at its inception; see MAI, "List of Publications of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation," *Indian Notes and Monographs* 36 (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1922). After Heye's

- death the museum's purpose shifted and was stated, "collection and preservation of material culture objects made by the natives of the western hemisphere . . . [to] afford serious students at the undergraduate and graduate levels every facility for research." MAI, "The History of the Museum," *Indian Notes and Monographs*, misc. ser., 56 (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1964): 3-4.
53. Carpenter, *Two Essays*, 85. In Heye's obituary, Samuel K. Lothrop makes clear that staff members saw their work as building a museum, not supporting a private collection: "We were all of us, I think, drawn towards Heye by the prospect of a new dream museum." Lothrop, "George Gustav Heye," 66.
  54. Kidwell, "Every Last Dishcloth"; Phillips, "Why Not Tourist Art?"; Mark Raymond Harrington, "Cuba before Columbus," *Indian Notes and Monographs*, misc. ser., 17 (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1921).
  55. MAI, "Aims and Objects"; MAI, "Guide to the Museum," *Indian Notes and Monographs*, unnumbered (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1922).
  56. While Heye was developing his museum, major changes in exhibition occurred elsewhere. The Pitt Rivers Museum focused on evolutionary typologies, while the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History—opened in 1910—followed culture areas. The Smithsonian and AMNH included life groups and dioramas, drawn from trends at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. See Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*; and Tony Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004); Chapman, "Arranging Ethnology"; John C. Ewers, *A Century of American Indian Exhibits in the Smithsonian Institution*, Smithsonian Report for 1958, 1959, 513-52; Jacknis, "Franz Boas and Exhibits"; and Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*. The MAI did not include life groups, although some models illustrated artists' conceptions of prehistoric village and home life. As in other things, Heye had his own ideas about what exhibits ought to do and eschewed those that did not fit his sense of museum economy, which invested much more in accumulating collections than creating visitor-friendly exhibits for an unlettered public. Where other museums depended on labels to educate, lack of labeling at MAI—and emphasis on "study collections" for "serious students"—probably created a sense of elitism. For his museum, Pitt Rivers emphasized autodidactic exhibit experiences, allowing visitors to teach themselves without reading; but MAI exhibits probably required considerable familiarity with the subject matter and materials, emphasizing research rather than pedagogy. Portable MAI school exhibits in the 1940s included much more labeling than the museum's permanent exhibits. Study collections were also used elsewhere, probably beginning with the British Museum in the 1850s; see Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*.
  57. On Heye's control over the collection, see Carpenter, *Two Essays*; Mason, "George G. Heye, 1874-1957"; and Burnett, "Recollections of E. K. Burnett." Without his staff, Heye also lost contacts to locate collections; regions where he could not identify appropriate collections for purchase are notably weaker than areas where anthropologists assisted him. As time went on, fewer anthropologists were involved in material culture research and collection, thus Heye could probably not have attracted the same kind of staff even if he had had funding for them. On specific collections strengths, see NMAI, "Scope of Collections Description." For the MAI's later history, see Force, *Heye and the Mighty*, 362, 381-82.
  58. The NMAI's mission statement reads, "The National Museum of the American Indian is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere, past, present, and future, through partnership with Native people and others. The museum works to support the continuance of culture, traditional values, and transitions in contemporary Native life."
  59. Hilden and Huhndorf, "Performing 'Indian,'" 163.
  60. Force, *Heye and the Mighty*, 381-82; see also Suzan Shown Harjo, "NMAI: A Promise America Is Keeping," *Native Peoples*, 9, no. 3 (1996), 28-34, <http://www.nativepeoples.com/article/articles/223/1/NMAI-A-Promise-America-Is-Keeping/Page1.html>. Force states that Inouye's involvement stemmed from his initial proposal to reinter all Native American human remains from Smithsonian collections on the National Mall to create a Native American memorial. Force's narrative privileges Inouye's efforts to create the NMAI, while Suzan Shown Harjo suggests Inouye's first concern was repatriation of human remains and other cultural objects and that saving the MAI was secondary.
  61. See U.S. Senate, *An Act to Establish the National Museum of the American Indian within the Smithsonian Institution, and for Other Purposes*, Public Law 101-185, 101st Cong., 1st sess. (1989), [http://anthropology.si.edu/repatriation/pdf/nmai\\_act.pdf](http://anthropology.si.edu/repatriation/pdf/nmai_act.pdf); and Force, *Heye and the Mighty*, 402, 445. John McCain, Guest Essay, *Native Peoples* 8, no. 1 (1995), quoted in Harjo, "NMAI." For a comparison of nationalist tactics used for the NMAI and France's Musée du Quai Branly, see Lebovics, "Post-Colonial Museums."
  62. Moynihan, 101st Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (November 14, 1989), quoted in Force, *Heye and the Mighty*, 443-44; on assuming control, see Hilden and Huhndorf, "Performing 'Indian,'" 167.
  63. Jacknis, "A New Thing?"; and Paul Chaat Smith, "Ghost in the Machine," in *Strong Hearts: Native American Visions and Voices*, ed. Peggy Roalf (New York: Aperture, 1995), 9. An early architectural planning document does not articulate Native control over the museum: "The objectives of NMAI continue the Smithsonian's mission to increase and diffuse knowledge, and to interpret the pluralistic nature of this nation's social, ethnic and cultural composition"; Venturi, Scott Brown, and Associates, *The Way of the People, NMAI Master Facilities Programming, Revised Draft Report* (Philadelphia: Venturi, Scott Brown, and Associates, 1991), 30.

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  63. Jacknis, "A New Thing?"; and Paul Chaat Smith, "Ghost in the Machine," in *Strong Hearts: Native American Visions and Voices*, ed. Peggy Roalf (New York: Aperture, 1995), 9. An early architectural planning document does not articulate Native control over the museum: "The objectives of NMAI continue the Smithsonian's mission to increase and diffuse knowledge, and to interpret the pluralistic nature of this nation's social, ethnic and cultural composition"; Venturi, Scott Brown, and Associates, *The Way of the People, NMAI Master Facilities Programming, Revised Draft Report* (Philadelphia: Venturi, Scott Brown, and Associates, 1991), 30.

64. On Deloria and Harjo, see Reynolds, "The Struggle to save the Heye Collection"; Lloyd New and Vine Deloria are quoted in Force, *Heye and the Mighty*, 203, 83.
65. William C. Sturtevant, "Repatriation Policy and the Heye Collection," *Museum Anthropology* 15, no. 2 (1991): 29–30; W. Richard West Jr., "The National Museum of the American Indian Repatriation Policy: Reply to William C. Sturtevant," *Museum Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (1991): 13–14; and Edmund Carpenter, "Repatriation Policy and the Heye Collection," *Museum Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (1991): 15–18. NMAI repatriations can also support Indigenous sovereignty, especially where it has traditionally been ignored. A newspaper article documenting the NMAI's repatriation of human remains to Cuba made this apparent: "For the first time in over 500 years, the Taino descendant population of Caridad de los Indios will be recognized in a formal international encounter. On behalf of their community, Cacique Panchito Ramirez and the elders of la Rancheria, will receive the human remains of seven of their ancestors." "Smithsonian's NMAI Returns Taino Remains to Cuba: After 500 Years the Taino Community Continues to Gain Recognition and Respect," *La Voz del Pueblo Taino* 5, no. 3 (July–September 2002): 1.
66. Manuel Ríos Morales, "Community as Identity," in *All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 158. Repossession of narrative and history is significant to the regrowth of nationalist expression. The nineteenth-century move toward making science and ethnology the only way to write about Indians both dehistoricized and denationalized Native people, because only nations could be expected to have histories; see Conn, *History's Shadow*, 23.
67. Richard West, quoted in Marilyn Christiano and Shelley Gollust, "This is America—National Museum of the American Indian," *Voice of America* broadcast, September 20, 2004, <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/archive/2004-09/a-2004-09-20-2-1.cfm>. The NMAI's philosophical perspective of Native self-representation through direct self-expression has been most widely disseminated by director Rick West in his writings and interviews; see W. Richard West Jr., "Research and Scholarship at the National Museum of the American Indian: The New 'Inclusiveness,'" *Museum Anthropology* 17, no. 1 (1993): 5–8; W. Richard West Jr., "The National Museum of the American Indian: Perspectives on Museums in the 21st Century," *Museum Anthropology* 18, no. 3 (1994): 53–58; West, "Museums and Native America"; Brown, "Native Treasures"; Clines, "Gathering of Treasures and Tribes"; Herscher, "Museum to Right Past Wrongs"; and Amanda J. Cobb, "Interview with W. Richard West, Director, National Museum of the American Indian," in "National Museum of the American Indian," ed. Amanda J. Cobb, special issue, *American Indian Quarterly* 29, nos. 3–4 (2005): 517–37; and Amanda J. Cobb, "The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2005): 485–506. On the difficulties of successfully carrying out this strategy, see Cynthia Chavez Lamar, "Collaborative Exhibit Development

at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian," in *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*, ed. Amy Lonetree and Amanda J. Cobb (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Hilden and Huhndorf, "Performing 'Indian'"; Julia Klein, "Native Americans in Museums: Lost in Translation?" *APF Reporter* 19, no. 4 (2001), <http://www.aliciapaterson.org/APF1904/Klein/Klein.html>; and McMullen, "Relevance and Reflexivity." For similar work by other institutions, see essays in Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown, eds., *Museums and Source Communities* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Laura Peers, *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions* (Lanham MD: AltaMira Press, 2007); and Ann McMullen, "The Currency of Consultation and Collaboration," *Museum Anthropology Review*, 2, no. 2 (2008).

68. Cobb, "Interview with W. Richard West."
69. NMAI, "George Gustav Heye."
70. On NMAI collections care, see Craig Howe, "Sovereignty and Cultural Property Policy in Museums" (paper presented at the Property Rights and Museum Practice workshop, University of Chicago Cultural Policy Center, winter 2000), <http://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/workshop/howe.html>; Nancy B. Rosoff, "Integrating Native Views into Museum Procedures: Hope and Practice at the National Museum of the American Indian," *Museum Anthropology* 22, no. 1 (1998): 33–42; and Henry, "Challenges in Managing Culturally Sensitive Collections." Tom Biolsi notes that such steps are increasingly common as tribal sovereignty—understood as dominion over bound lands—is extended to other domains of power and influence outside those boundaries. He also suggests that the NMAI has become a "national indigenous space," over which collective Native sovereignty has been cast; Thomas Biolsi, "Imagined Geographies: Sovereignty, Indigenous Space, and American Indian Struggle," *American Ethnologist* 32, no. 2 (2005): 248. The degree to which tribal nations in the United States have contributed financially to the NMAI may also indicate the museum's perception and designation as a national Indigenous space; see Harjo, "NMAI."
71. Cobb, "National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty," 486.
72. Paul Chaat Smith has suggested that the NMAI, with Indian gaming and repatriation legislation, is a very large payment on America's "moral debt" to Native people; personal communication with the author, August 7, 2007. Ruth Phillips has also questioned whether museum collaborations with Native communities represent "symbolic restitution." Ruth B. Phillips, "Community Collaboration in Exhibitions," introduction to *Museums and Source Communities*, ed. Peers and Brown, 157–70.
73. Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*.
74. NMAI, *Strategic Plan: 2006–2008* (Washington DC: National Museum of the Ameri-

- can Indian, 2005); NMAI, "Intellectual Framework for the Collections and Collecting Plan."
75. Hilden and Huhndorf, "Performing 'Indian,'" 162. On master narratives, see Edward M. Bruner, "Ethnography as Narrative," in *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor Turner and Edward M. Bruner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 135–55.
  76. Robert Warrior suggests that Native writings that stress idealism and essentialism and overemphasize authenticity and tradition are potentially dangerous and limiting; I suggest that similar museum products are equally limiting and present the public with images that fit preconceptions but do little to serve Native people and sovereign expressions; see Robert Allen Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). Scott Lyons notes that desire to repossess tradition and culture admits loss and can prompt a sense of guilt. This suggests that the traditional—however reclaimed or reintroduced—remains a desired state for many, thus furthering dependence on older models rather than negotiation of new Native expressions. See Scott Richard Lyons, "Crying for Revision: Postmodern Indians and Rhetorics of Tradition," in *Making and Unmaking the Prospects for Rhetoric*, ed. Theresa Enos (Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), 123–31.
  77. I cannot do justice here to this expanding body of literature, but on intellectual sovereignty, see Georges E. Sioui, *For an Amerindian Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic*, trans. Sheila Fishman (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); and Robert Allen Warrior, *Tribal Secrets and the People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). On appropriations of spirituality, see Lisa Aldred, "Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sundances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality," *American Indian Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2000): 329–52; and Laurie Ann Whitt, "Cultural Imperialism and the Marketing of Native America," in *Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues*, ed. Duane Champagne (Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press, 1999), 169–92. For reclaiming Indigenous tribal names, see Cornel Pewewardy, "Renaming Ourselves on Our Own Terms: Race, Tribal Nations, and Representation in Education," *Indigenous Nations Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2000): 11–28. On rhetorical sovereignty, see Lyons, "Crying for Revision"; and Scott Richard Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?" *College Composition and Communication* 51, no. 3 (2000): 447–68. For literary nationalism, see Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); and Craig S. Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). On political sovereignty, see Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
  78. Jacki Thompson Rand, "Why I Can't Visit the National Museum of the American Indian: Reflections of an Accidental Privileged Insider, 1989–1994," *Common-Place* 7, no. 4 (2007), <http://www.common-place.org/vol-07/no-04/rand>. In many ways, the NMAI has reemphasized old museum traditions of dependence on objects as storytelling devices or illustrations. This dependence results in major parts of the Native story remaining untold or being accompanied by items that visitors do not find worthy of inclusion in what they have been told is the world's best collection of "Indian stuff"; see Chavez, "Collaborative Exhibit Development." The NMAI's continued reliance on objects is especially surprising considering the points included in an early programming document: "Although . . . objects held by the Smithsonian are unsurpassed . . . Native American people are not 'object-oriented.' . . . The picture of Native American life should . . . not . . . over-emphasize the objects themselves over the people and culture." Venturi, Scott Brown, and Associates, *Way of the People*, 40.
  79. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays: A Tribal Voice* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996). The intellectual freedom of university scholars, as compared to those in museums, may be no small matter in this decision; political and intellectual structures of existing museums may not allow complete expression of Native cultural sovereignty, except perhaps in tribal museums. See McMullen, "Relevance and Reflexivity"; and McMullen, "Currency of Consultation." However, following Robert Warrior's thoughts on Native intellectualism, Native museum work must remain engaged with the wider world and not be conducted only in tribally controlled domains; see Warrior, *Tribal Secrets*.
  80. Native artists have used their own art and others' to talk about political and cultural sovereignty, but more striking examples come from contemporary Native photographers' readings of historic Native imagery and their interpretations of survivance—as Anishinabe author Gerald Vizenor has used it—and of sovereignty strategies visible therein. See Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin, eds., *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives in Canadian Art* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1993); Theresa Harlan, "Creating a Visual History: A Question of Ownership," in Roalf, *Strong Hearts*; Theresa Harlan, "Indigenous Photographies: A Space for Indigenous Realities," in *Native Nations: Journeys in American Photography*, ed. Jane Alison (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1998), 233–45; Jolene Rickard, "Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand," in Roalf, *Strong Hearts*, 51–54; Jolene Rickard, "The Occupation of Indigenous Space as 'Photograph,'" in Alison, *Native Nations*, 57–71; Hulleah Tsinnahjinnie, "When Is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words?" in Alison, *Native Nations*, 41–55; and Dubin, "Native American Imagemaking."

81. Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty," 449. See also Weaver, *That the People Might Live*; and Womack, *Red on Red*. Native people put in the position of "reading" objects often refuse to comment on items they have identified as "not ours," suggesting that they recognize that culturally specific, literal readings are desired and decline to offer comment or interpretation on a culture other than their own.
82. Warrior, *Tribal Secrets*. Ruth Phillips and others in the Great Lakes Research Alliance for the Study of Aboriginal Arts and Cultures (GRASAC), based at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, are currently drawing on museums and archives to create a shared Web-accessible database of objects and resources to encourage interdisciplinary research on Great Lakes visual culture. While some individuals involved in these research projects are not "material culture specialists," work already underway on the relation of Indigenous diplomacy, rhetoric, wampum belts, and treaties promises to lay new ground for intertextualization of material culture and other expressive forms.
83. Venturi, *Way of the People*.
84. As Hupa tribal member Merv George Jr. said of the NMAI, "They have these items. But they don't have the stories that go along with the items"; interview with Merv George Jr. quoted in Klein, "Native Americans in Museums." Despite the richness and complexity of the collections, Heye's collecting and curatorial practices and often pervasive disregard for objects' documentation can limit the collections' potential. Descriptions of MAI work during his lifetime recount confusion, loss, or destruction of field notes, excavation records, and other documentation, characterized as a luxury Heye could not always afford to maintain. These losses significantly reduce the collections' value for almost all uses. NMAI, "Intellectual Framework for the Collections and Collecting Plan"; and NMAI, "Scope of Collections Description."
85. This is connected with Fabian's "denial of coevalness," which suggests that ethnography temporally distances its object from its recorder by making it impossible for both to exist in the same place at the same time. Living peoples whose works are placed in museums as ethnology or primitive art face the same difficulty of bridging the time gap created by this distancing and museum objectification of material culture as frozen life. See Fabian, *Time and the Other*; Janet Catherine Berlo, "The Formative Years of Native American Art History," introduction to *The Early Years of Native American Art History*, ed. Janet Catherine Berlo (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 1–21; and Jonaitis, "Franz Boas, John Swanton, and the New Haida Sculpture."
86. Hilden and Huhndorf, "Performing 'Indian,'" 170; Lloyd Kiva New, "Translating the Past," in *All Roads Are Good*, 42.
87. On the treatment of objects as art, see Ruth B. Phillips, "Disrupting Past Paradigms: The National Museum of the American Indian and the First Peoples Hall at the Canadian Museum of Civilization," *Public Historian* 28, no. 2 (2006): 75–80;

Jacknis, "A New Thing?" For the commodification of Native objects, see Hilden, "Race for Sale"; Hilden and Huhndorf, "Performing 'Indian'"; and Dubin, *Native America Collected*.

88. MAI histories describe Heye's overemphasis—as a collector rather than a scientist—on whole ceramic vessels and other complete items and his specific disregard for potsherds; see Lothrop, "George Gustav Heye, 1874–1956." I suspect that, lacking the knowledge or imagination to mentally reconstruct them into complete objects, Heye did not find potsherds and other fragmentary objects "readable."
89. Pearce summarizes Michael Thompson's "rubbish theory," which divides material culture into rubbish (objects of no value), transients (commodities and items that move within capitalist systems and whose value declines over time), and "durables" (things whose value appreciates and is often spiritual, scientific, or artistic); see Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections*, 34. Heye seemed uninterested in transients in this system, but he obviously valued both durables and rubbish in his attempts to understand Native lifeways. This presentation of Thompson's theory does not account for transient objects in collectors' and museums' hands that move into the durable category as they age and become appreciated as art or artifacts; see Ann McMullen, "See America First: Tradition, Innovation, and Indian Country Arts," in *Indigenous Motivations: Recent Acquisitions from the National Museum of the American Indian* (Washington DC: National Museum of the American Indian, 2006), 19–25.