

Cite this article: Julia Silverman and Mary McNeil, introduction to “Art History and the Local,” In the Round, *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2022), <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.13157>.

Art History and the Local

Julia Silverman, PhD candidate, Department of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University

Mary McNeil (Mashpee Wampanoag), PhD candidate, American Studies Program, Harvard University, and incoming assistant professor in the Department of Studies in Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora, Tufts University

Ralph Fasanella’s painting *Dress Shop* (fig. 1) attests to the enduring importance of the local. In the center of the composition, Fasanella (1914–1997) peels away the brick façade of the garment factory, allowing viewers to witness a busy shop floor. On the left, workers—most of them women—sit at long tables, poring over black sewing machines. On the right, workers steam, press, and finish the garments that will make their way to market. Thus, *Dress Shop* offers a glimpse into a scene Fasanella likely considered “local.” Having accompanied his mother, a buttonhole maker, to the New York City dress shop where she worked during his childhood, Fasanella was, by adulthood, intimately familiar with the rhythm and hum of a factory floor.¹ Nurtured by his mother’s antifascist and trade-unionist politics, Fasanella would eventually become a radical labor organizer whose fight for the dignity of workers’ lives caused him to be blacklisted during the McCarthy era.² This familiarity with which he approaches *Dress Shop*’s subjects subverts its otherwise schematized aesthetic: while his figures might seem generic representations of anonymous workers, Fasanella individuates each figure’s dress and posture—even modeling some after himself and people he knew.³ A yellow sign hanging on the building’s façade, “In Memory of the Triangle Shirt Workers,” reminds the viewer that the lives of workers are both sacred and precious, emphasizing that protected labor is, quite literally, a matter of life and death.⁴ Thus, the focal center of the painting, the shop floor, illustrates not just sites of production but a community of laborers themselves.



Fig. 1. Ralph Fasanella, *Dress Shop*, 1972. Oil on canvas, 45 x 92 in. Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York; museum purchase; N0003.1983. Photo: Richard Walker

The local of *Dress Shop*'s working-class subjects is not solely confined to the shop floor. Rather, Fasanella gestures toward an abundant social world and the richness of workers' interiorities just outside the bounds of the dress shop. Below the shop floor and bordering the building, windows provide colorful vignettes of life outside of labor. “I'm using [the windows] to show that [the workers are] not just working,” Fasanella later explained, “They read—they think—but they're caught making a living.”⁵ Fasanella first began painting, upon the suggestion of a fellow rank-and-file member, as a mode of physical therapy to mitigate the finger pain he sustained from decades of manufacturing work; he was therefore acutely aware of how workers' intellectual and cultural passions could be a form of healing.⁶ By pushing domestic scenes—women cooking and sewing at home, quiet moments of repose and introspection seen through the windows of the surrounding domiciles—to the surface of the picture plane, Fasanella resists centering the shop floor as the sole site of meaning for his subjects' lives.

Finally, *Dress Shop* places its viewer in an uncertain position, hovering precariously between inside and outside. Twinned exit signs—one reversed in the painting's foreground and the other, correctly oriented, at the back of the factory wall—gesture at a compositional instability. On the right side of the factory wall, windows become portals into other spaces, their ambiguity heightened by the painting's unrelenting visual flatness. While Fasanella was clear on his intended audience—“I didn't paint my paintings to hang in some rich guy's living room,” he famously said—the work itself adjusts to various potential viewerships.⁷ For example, while the painting's elevated vantage point might suggest a dynamic of panoptic surveillance, its spatial openness leaves the possibility for identification, intimacy, and perhaps even solidarity. Thus, *Dress Shop* also implicates outside viewers, forcing them to interrogate their own positions within scenes of quotidian productivity and social life. The act of beckoning its viewers closer, of enveloping them within the scene or else letting the scene bleed into their “real world,” creates a particular form of intimacy in real space that performs the groundwork for political imagination and action.

For Fasanella, “the local” operates in three distinct ways. First, *Dress Shop* puts its viewers in a particular place—the dress shop floor in working-class Manhattan. Second, Fasanella methodologically complicates the notion of the “schematic drawing,” individuating the painting's manifold subjects and using the flatness of perspective to represent the totality of working-class life—both labor and leisure—on the same visual plane. Third, *Dress Shop* articulates a particular working-class epistemology by centering intimate knowledge of the dress-shop floor and working-class history. For Fasanella, the local was as much a set of personal relationships and political commitments as a place, and his paintings locate the communities of laborers, organizers, and unionists, among whom he found a home, at the center of his artistic practice. In line with Fasanella's *Dress Shop*, an attunement to the local as place, method, and epistemology undergirds “Art History and the Local.”

Why our turn to the local now? We write this introduction amid what many social scientists and policy makers have termed the “double pandemic” of COVID-19 and white supremacy.⁸ Within the past two years, specific locales—Unist'ot'en Camp, Mauna Kea, Louisville, Minneapolis, Mi'gma'gi, and Kamloops, to name only a few—have emerged as focal points of resistance in discussions of white supremacy and settler-colonial violence. Concurrently, COVID-19 has exacerbated and highlighted the enduring impacts of white supremacy and settler-colonialism at the level of infrastructure and health outcomes for vulnerable communities. Finally, pandemic-related mass unemployment has foregrounded the contingency of housing security in our neighborhoods and underscored the importance of

mutual aid, not charity. Thus, while this “double pandemic” is global in scope, its effects have been most acutely felt on the local level.

Even within the traditionally cloistered space of academia, the last two year’s shelter-in-place and social-distancing guidelines have required many of us to stand still and take stock of our immediate surroundings. While many scholars have long centered the communities they inhabit, for others, the “double pandemic” has urged a reevaluation of their positionality and scholarly focus. How are our subjects, objects, methods, and communities of study connected to the immediate context in which we work? What is our relationship to the environments and communities we inhabit; is it one of collaboration or extraction? To introduce the essays in “Art History and the Local,” we explore how the renewed emphasis on “the local” has been taken up by artists, art historians, and museum practitioners.

“The local” takes on particular urgency with regard to American art, a subfield whose emergence was driven by cultural nationalism and exceptionalism. As Wanda Corn discusses, academic interest in American culture can be traced directly to the interwar theories of writers like Van Wyck Brooks and Lewis Mumford, who sought to define the national character of American art in opposition to that of Europe.⁹ Using regional styles as a foil against what they understood to be the homogenizing impulse of industrialization, these critics position “folk” traditions—predominantly those of the European diaspora—as seemingly authentic manifestations of American artistic ingenuity. Thus, we want to be clear that “the local” as we understand it is a concept distinct from the regionalism of the interwar period. Whereas proponents of regionalism understood vernacular art as raw material in service of creating a *national* heritage, we understand “the local” as resisting this impulse foundational to the subfield’s inception. As scholars and curators work to highlight figures and artistic practices underrepresented in the field, how can we then develop methods that attend adequately to how those subjects reveal the inadequacies of extant methods, forms of writing, and institutional structures? How might these stories necessitate different relationships between historians and artistic practitioners?

This urge to cleave studies of American art from nationalism has prompted several scholars in recent years to turn toward “the global” as a means of disrupting the nation-state as a de facto intellectual border. From studies of empire to “oceanic worlds,” to other transnational approaches, “global” studies have highlighted previously tacit conversations, networks of power, and flows of material goods. In practice, however, the expansive geographies of such projects can sometimes preclude sustained commitment to places and people and, at worst, unintentionally replicate the colonial dynamics of land grabbing.¹⁰

“The local” represents a potential alternative to both nationalist and global models of art history through geographic specificity. We frame this concept as a place, a source of knowledge, and a set of methodologies and relationships that together articulate the contours of a growing set of concerns for scholars of American art. More pointedly, we make a case for “the local” as an analytic that can allow art historians and scholars of visual culture to center the political nature of space, place, and geography in examinations of particular aesthetic practices.

Local as Place

Through our invocation of “the local” as place, we suggest that art historians and practitioners should account for the *particular* social, cultural, ecological, and political processes that humans and more-than-humans have used to “make place.”¹¹ Following the admonitions of countless geographers, we are careful here to differentiate “place” from “space.” As Yi-Fu Tuan famously argues, “Space is more abstract than ‘place.’ What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value.”¹² Thus, the local is transformed into a specific, individuated place through human and more-than-human engagement and meaning-making.

“Visibility” is key to the production of place. As Tuan states, “Places can be made visible by a number of means: rivalry or conflict with other places, visual prominence, and the evocative power of art, architecture, ceremonials, and rites.”¹³ In other words, the visual prominence of particular fixtures in a scape (such as waterways or rock formations) imbue a sense of “place” for particular locals; humans (and, though outside of Tuan’s scope, more-than-humans) strengthen their visible connection to particular locals through visible practices and objects, such as monuments, architectural structures, ceremonies, and the erection of real or imagined borders and the visible defense of these enclosures are integral to the creation of place. In short, humans and more-than-humans transform “space” into “place” through particular practices that emphasize the visual, the visible, and the recognizable.

While Tuan does allude to the fact that the visible has historically engendered “rivalry or conflict” with regard to place, key scholars have pushed this theorization further by emphasizing how aesthetic and visual practices have been integral to settler-colonial and imperial claims to particular places and the naturalization of conquest, dispossession, and domination. Scholars Jean O’Brien (White Earth Ojibwe) and Tiffany Lethabo King have emphasized the visibility of such forms of settler place making through their explorations of cartography and monumentalizing. The map and the monument—objects that have hovered between the categories of “art” and “material culture” in scholarly consideration—have historically been used to justify what King terms “conquistador-settler” claims to Black and Indigenous lands and lives and to position “Blackness and Indigeneity as states of geographic, cartographic, and ontological otherness.”¹⁴ Moreover, as O’Brien notes in her examination of settler material culture in New England, hyperlocal monuments and place markers “assert[ed] that non-Indians were the *first* people to erect the proper institutions of a social order worthy of notice” and enshrined the purportedly *last* vestiges of Indigenous presence in such a way that “denied modernity to Indians, and in the process created a narrative of Indian extinction.”¹⁵

As these scholars emphasize, for non-white, non-settler subjects and communities, objects of visual culture have historically engendered their violent exclusion and expulsion from both particular places and the category of “the human.” However, as Katherine McKittrick argues in her critical examination of enslaved Black women’s geographic thought, “One way to contend with unjust and uneven human/inhuman categorizations is to think about, and perhaps employ, the alternative geographic formulations that subaltern communities advance.”¹⁶ Current efforts to rethink the genre of American landscape painting in terms of racialized and embodied geopolitics are taking up this charge.¹⁷ While settler-conquistador visual culture has historically positioned BIPOC communities as landless, placeless, and “ungeographic,” such practices reflect settler-colonial and imperial needs to anxiously naturalize difference and domination—not actual fact.¹⁸ Rather, subaltern geographical practices, as Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman notes in her examinations of contemporary Indigenous women’s literature, “challenge the seemingly objective and transparent forms of

Western mapping . . . [and] tell and map a story of survivance and future.”¹⁹ Such practices can speak to deep historical relationships to one’s locale that far predate settler arrival. As Christine DeLucia notes on the relationship between memory and place making in the wake of King Philip’s War, for Indigenous nations in so-called New England, “The Northeast was already memorial terrain and had been for millenia” prior to conquest and attempts at dispossession in full.²⁰ These practices can also develop within varying contexts of unfreedom and the forced creation of diasporas, allowing communities to forge place-based, locally specific strategies for survival and fugitivity. For example, regarding ecologies of the enslaved, Tiya Miles asserts that “enslaved people ‘knew rivers.’ In imagining and enacting their freedom dreams, they took flight in relation to and relation with their specific environments.”²¹

Thus, the notion of “local as place” argues for a centering of the locally specific ways in which politics and aesthetics are dialogically engaged. If, as innumerable scholars have shown, “place” and the “local” are always dynamic, politically charged, and imbued with meaning through human and more-than-human visual practice, then we argue for an understanding of artistic and cultural production that more carefully attends to the locally specific sociopolitical concerns that inform artists’ aesthetic practices, as well as the ways in which their work engages its terrain and ecology. In short, we argue that *context matters*—not solely because local data might be extrapolated to make broader conclusions about national or global phenomena but because, for many, the local is the most immediate sphere of influence, concern, and meaning making. Attention to place-specific knowledge and practice can often reveal the sedimentation of power that accrues in particular locals, as well as subaltern artists and communities’ refutations of logics that seek to situate them as “ungeographic” and placeless.

Local as Episteme

Second, we offer the framework of “local as episteme” to call attention to the place-specific ways of knowing that frequently inform both artistic and scholarly production. These forms of knowledge are derived from a deep relationship with, attention to, and care for specific places. For us, “local as episteme” functions in two distinct but interrelated ways. First, it is an affirmation that certain artistic practices—particularly art production using gathered organic or natural materials—cultivate intimacies and knowledge of place inaccessible through other means. Second, we understand “local as episteme” as a call to take forms of place-based knowledge seriously as science, history, and scholarship *without* needing to compare or assimilate them to established scholarly theories or methods. Thus, we argue that local ways of knowing have the power to transform the field of art history, insofar as scholarly attempts to center “local as episteme” approach such endeavors with the requisite level of respect and transparency to community knowledge-carriers.

To elaborate upon the first point, “local as episteme” seeks to center the reciprocal relationship that particular artists and makers have with their locals. These relationships are generative sites where life-sustaining knowledges are produced. In making such a claim, we are heavily indebted to Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s critical essay “Land as Pedagogy.” In describing “Nishnaabeg intelligence,” Simpson argues that “education comes from the roots up. It comes from being enveloped by land. An individual’s intimate relationship with the spiritual and physical elements of creation is at

the center of a learning journey that is lifelong.”²² Here, Simpson asserts that Nishnaabeg knowledge systems are inalienable from the land that has sustained her nation for centuries.

Particular locals look, feel, smell, and sound a certain way because of the very specific ways that humans and our more-than-human relatives have transformed the space. But, as Simpson argues, we are equally transformed by our local environments, and the recognition of this reciprocal relationship creates a space where knowledge can be generated. Thus, in offering the framework of “local as episteme,” we uplift the work of artists and art historians who do this work. For example, as Kelly Church (Odawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi) and Renée Wasson Dillard (Anishinaabe) discussed in the Fall 2021 issue of *Panorama*, black ash basketry requires not just an understanding of weaving technique. Rather, making is necessarily intertwined with knowledge of the broader ecological networks that actually produce the needed weaving material. What visual, haptic, or olfactory qualities of a tree make it a “good basket tree,” to use Church’s words?²³ How might basket makers’ close attention to these plants position them as stewards of the trees against environmental change and invasive species?²⁴ Thus Church, in particular, characterizes black ash basket makers as holders of place-based knowledge essential to their craft, positioning the act of making as a way of being in good relation with the ecosystems that enable their work.

We also look toward local ways of knowing—community-based histories, stories, and haptic knowledge among them—as tools of scholarly understanding that exceed or trouble the current theoretical toolkit of art historians. Particularly, recent studies of archival practice and historical documentation have provided opportunities for imagining convergences between academic and community-oriented knowledge; Rose Miron’s research on the Stockbridge Munsee Mohican Nation’s “archival activism,” for example, has illuminated how the nation used archival materials to articulate the primacy of their own historical narratives.²⁵ Meanwhile, Aaron Glass, Judith Berman, and Rainer Hatoum’s digital humanities project on Franz Boas’s 1897 ethnography of the Kwakwaka’wakw First Nation has developed methods of organizing metadata that make its database more accessible to community members. In addition to creating records based on discrete material items, for example, objects mentioned in Boas’s account are also linked to songs and narratives along genealogical lines, a record more in keeping with Kwakwaka’wakw cultural practices.²⁶ Both projects analyze how material properties of records and the very categories of analysis, retrofitted to the needs of particular communities, can be useful across epistemic boundaries.

Such projects provide a model and a metaphor for “local as episteme” within art history. A discipline whose foundational methods are based in close visual observation and formal analysis, art history has already long grappled with the subjectivity inherent in our empirical methods and the “melancholy” of trying to overcome a gap between the visual and verbal.²⁷ This gap, however, provides an opportunity for art historians to rethink what kinds of evidence constitute the basis for scholarship. James Elkins has recently argued, using the term “local” specifically, that the Western epistemological foundations of art history make it fundamentally incapable of accommodating “other” voices and historical strategies: “As different as local and national practices can be they do not produce or represent differences in the ways art history is written.”²⁸ Even when academics discuss topics like “difference” or “hybridity,” he claims, similar structures of writing are reproduced. Yet, in soliciting essays for this “In the Round” that grapple with using family lore, dreams, and stories as evidence, we suggest that this need not be the case.

In fact, we believe that art history, given the primacy of complex objects and visibility, is a critical site to account for the simultaneous coexistence and incommensurability of different forms of knowledge. Greg Sarris (Coast Miwok, Pomo) has often written about how the baskets of Mabel McKay (Pomo), for example, compel viewers to regard dreams and prophecy as inherent to their making.²⁹ While outsiders might not ever understand the content of McKay’s dreams or how that content is translated into woven form, responsibly contending with her baskets as an art historian requires an acceptance of the unknowable as critical to rigorous research.

In other cases, taking localized ontologies of “art” objects seriously might involve conceding that their images should *not* be published or described by art historians at all.³⁰ In short, enacting the local as episteme means finding ways of embracing opacity in a discipline premised on visibility. Moreover, “local as episteme” requires scholars within the traditional bounds of the academy to acknowledge that while their introduction to place-based ways of knowing may be new, these knowledges have sustained particular communities since time immemorial. Thus, methodologies that seek to center local as episteme must explicitly reject the impulse to “legitimize” particular forms of place-based knowledge to audiences outside of the local. Finally, “local as episteme” requires honoring the fact that certain communities may not wish for their local knowledge systems to fully make their way into mainstream institutions. As Leanne Betasamosake Simpson argues, Indigenous “land-based, community-based intellectuals” must privilege the cultivation of future generations of knowledge keepers *within* their nations and communities, not the academy.³¹

This need not be a dead end; rather, embracing local forms of knowledge opens a wide range of possibilities for art-historical research. As Édouard Glissant suggests, resisting the urge to render opaque subjects known or to assimilate them to pre-established scholarly conventions is precisely what enables conversation, genuine relations, and productive entanglements: “Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components.”³² The many valences of “the local” are perhaps akin to a fabric: place intertwined with knowledge intertwined with method. In keeping knowledge local, sometimes even unknowable, “local as episteme” resists collection and accumulation in a single spot. In entangling our research and ourselves with the many people and communities that inform it, we might begin the difficult work of building deep relationships with places, communities, and knowledge holders that resist clear extraction and ensure our collective survival.

Local as Method

Finally, “local as method” seeks to counter transient, extractivist modes of scholarly production by investing in deep reciprocal relationships with communities of study and at home. Historically, art institutions and universities have segregated themselves—whether intellectually through an orientation to an international intellectual elite or physically through security guards and gates—from the neighborhoods and homelands they occupy. Furthermore, funding structures like short-term residential fellowships and contingent faculty positions have resulted in lifestyles of continual itinerancy, especially among early-career scholars, often impeding long-term investment in the local politics of the places scholars move through. As Ege Yumusak brilliantly argues, universities often rely on an “allure of placelessness,” the notion of a scholarly community as a mass of ideas rather than

a physical location. This has political implications: “Placeless academics,” Yumusak writes, “cannot act on the structural, as it shapes their production, by effecting the particular, as it commands their individual actions. Even if they become interpreters of activism, their voices—so long as they speak only for the individual and not for the many—will have limited practical value.”³³ Given the placelessness that academia produces and ideas about individual academic freedom, it can be easy to forget that the conditions of our work are intertwined with our commutes to campus, our landlords, our scholarly interlocutors, the local businesses supported or displaced by university development, and the land our universities had to acquire to exist at all.³⁴ How can we acknowledge this interconnectedness in our work? How might our research reverse the centripetal pull of intellectual capital toward the university, even if we act from within it?

The focus on specific locales as sites of research, per se, is not a new phenomenon. In anthropology especially, fieldwork has been an integral part of ethnography since at least the early twentieth century. Yet, as scholars such as Michel-Rolph Trouillot illuminate, a limited geographic focus has not always been accompanied by respect for local forms of knowledge, discourse, and desire.³⁵ By intellectually severing communities of study from broader material and intellectual flows that, in turn, implicate the researcher, scholars have often framed “the field,” a site of research, as something *out there* rather than as a place contiguous with that of intellectual production.³⁶ Instead, Trouillot argues, the very intellectual questions we ask are tethered to place, and specifying that place forces researchers to enact a methodological openness: “What is the purpose of this dialogue? Who are the interlocutors? To whom does it—and should it—make sense?”³⁷ Taking “the local” seriously, we suggest that the answer to Trouillot’s second and third questions is not always “academics.”

In this assertion, we build on the work of scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou), whose foundational 1999 book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, articulates an ethos of Kaupapa Māori research informed by respect for cultural values and protocols.³⁸ Pushing back on the notion of research as inherently extractive, Smith articulates a vision for action-oriented projects that frame scholarship as a relational practice. Relatedly, several scholars in the adjacent fields of Black Studies and Native American and Indigenous Studies, such as Clyde Woods, Lisa Brooks, and Christine DeLucia, have increasingly attempted to create scholarship that, in its telling of history, is attuned to the particular epistemologies and political needs of those communities.³⁹ Within the broader art world, activist groups such as [Strike MoMA](#), [Art Against Displacement](#), and several newly formed museum unions are only a few of the organizations who have sought to unravel art institutions’ ongoing roles in processes of gentrification, social inequity, colonization, and genocide.⁴⁰ What can art historians learn from these trends? In short, we suggest that “local as method” involves critical interrogation of the discipline’s ability to actually engage, rather than just describe, observed phenomena.

We want to emphasize that we are not inventing a novel concept. Rather, we are trying to put words to what we observe as a growing impulse within the field. Art historians such as Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora) have long understood “the local” as a site of meaningful engagement. In the Fall 2019 issue of *Panorama*, Sascha Scott even refers to Emily Moore’s *Proud Raven, Panting Wolf* as an example of “slow art history”: long-term engagement with communities’ members and elders in addition to archives.⁴¹ And in the last decade, Nicole Fleetwood, Alexander Nemerov, Rebecca Zorach, and others have developed new art-

historical methods by working through family histories, community-based scholarly practice, or both.⁴²

In proposing the term “local,” therefore, we support the continuity and visibility of such practices within art history, precisely because they are often overlooked or disincentivized by current institutional structures. Moreover, as terms like “community collaboration” come to supplement concepts like “decolonization” among historians and museum professionals, it has become especially urgent to ask what these terms do as historical practice. What defines a community? Who determines the criteria for “collaborative” or “decolonial?”

Indeed, even as we call for a transformation of how scholarship is produced, “local as method” cautions us to avoid overstating the impact of these shifts, since institutional hegemony is always reconfiguring. As Fred Moten and Stefano Harney argue, museums no longer operate through older modes of exclusion and elitism. “It’s not that they’re no longer exclusionary,” as Moten said in a 2021 panel, “it’s that their practices of exclusion are extraction and incorporation.”⁴³ In other words, “community outreach” does not negate the risk of extraction; without analysis and change at the level of funding, methodology, or policy, it simply enacts a quieter and more insidious manifestation of consolidating knowledge, power, and beauty within institutional walls. Thus, by focusing on “the local” as a concept broader than any specific scholarly or museological practice, we call attention to it as a set of practices that asks what it means to put back rather than gather, disburse rather than accumulate, and converse instead of assume: to let knowledge stay in place.

Essay Overviews

The essays in this section represent many valences of “the local.” Together, they provide just a sampling of how emphasis on the local might be centered in art-historical and museological practice. Taking the union “local” as his point of departure, Samuel Ewing analyzes LaoToya Ruby Frazier’s documentary project *The Last Cruze*. Ewing theorizes the local in terms of sociopolitical relationships, framing art practice as a pathway toward solidarity. Centering Gullah ecological knowledges, Molly Robinson examines traditional basketmakers’ responses to the material flux of sweetgrass due to climate change in the South Carolina coastal lowlands. Robinson positions Gullah sweetgrass basketmakers’ haptic familiarity with the material as a form of scientific knowledge that exceeds traditional climate science. Rachel Winter’s essay contends with diaspora, bridging locals, and the act of place making through family lore in the art of Ethel Wright Mohamed. Winter examines *Arabian Nights*, a series of embroideries that Mohamed created for her husband, Hassan. Anthony Trujillo (Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo) reflects on family history, dreams, and his encounters with Pueblo katsinam and pottery in Harvard University’s Peabody Museum, which he theorizes as a troubled and spiritually active space. Finally, curators Layla Bermeo, Tess Lukey (Aquinnah Wampanoag), and Marina Tyquiengco (CHamoru) offer examples of their practical efforts to deepen relationships with local Indigenous communities and to center Black and Native artists and voices within Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts. What reparative practices can Indigenous and allied curators cultivate within colonial institutions, and is an “Indigenized” museum possible? That the five essays in this section represent only a few of the urgent and timely proposals that we received speaks to the charged potential of “the local” as an analytic within American art history.

Notes

-
- ¹ Marc Fasanella, *Ralph Fasanella: Images of Optimism* (Portland: Pomegranate, 2017); Ralph Fasanella and Erika Doss, *Ralph Fasanella: A More Perfect Union* (New York: Andrew Edlin Gallery, 2013); Suzette Lane McAvoy, *Urban Visions: The Paintings of Ralph Fasanella* (Ithaca: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, in cooperation with New York State Museum, 1985); and Patrick Watson, *Fasanella's City: The Paintings of Ralph Fasanella with the Story of His Life and Art* (New York: Knopf, 1973).
- ² Leslie Umberger, “Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget,” in Fasanella, *Images of Optimism*, 5.
- ³ Fasanella and Doss, *Ralph Fasanella*, 74.
- ⁴ The 1911 fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory killed some 146 New York City textile workers, mostly women. These preventable deaths were largely due to the common industrial practice of locking workers into factories during working hours. See Occupational Safety and Health Administration, “The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire,” 2011, <https://www.osha.gov/aboutosha/40-years/trianglefactoryfire>.
- ⁵ Watson, *Fasanella's City*, 100.
- ⁶ Umberger, “Ralph Fasanella,” 8.
- ⁷ Fasanella, quoted in Valérie Rousseau, “Subway Riders,” exhibition label for *Self-Taught Genius: Treasures from the American Folk Art Museum*, curated by Stacy C. Hollander and Valérie Rousseau, held at the American Folk Art Museum, New York, 2014.
- ⁸ See the introduction to the special issue of *Qualitative Social Work*, which more deeply unpacks this term: Briana Starks, “The Double Pandemic: COVID-19 and White Supremacy,” *Qualitative Social Work* 20, nos. 1–2 (2021): 222–24.
- ⁹ Wanda M. Corn, “Coming of Age: Historical Scholarship in American Art,” *Art Bulletin* 70, no. 2 (June 1988): 192.
- ¹⁰ The irony of historians of colonialism staking claims on particular places has been addressed by Shawon Kinew both in personal conversations with one of the authors and in the description for her course “Old Masters in a New World.”
- ¹¹ We use the term “more-than-human” to cite Indigenous scientists’ arguments for relational, multispecies ethnographies. See Kim TallBear, “Why Interspecies Thinking Needs Indigenous Standpoints,” *Society for Cultural Anthropology: Field Sights*, November 18, 2011, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/why-interspecies-thinking-needs-indigenous-standpoints>.
- ¹² Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977; repr., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 6.
- ¹³ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 178.
- ¹⁴ Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), xi, 76, respectively.
- ¹⁵ Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xii–xiii. Emphasis added.
- ¹⁶ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xix.
- ¹⁷ Rachel Burke’s forthcoming dissertation on Henry “Box” Brown’s *Mirror of Slavery*, for example (Department of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University), uses the Fugitive Slave Act (1850) to consider nineteenth-century landscape painting as inherently racialized.
- ¹⁸ Regarding the “ungeographic,” see McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, x.
- ¹⁹ Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 23.

-
- ²⁰ Christine M. DeLucia, *Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 16.
- ²¹ Tiya Miles, “I’ve Known Rivers”: *Slave Resistance and Environmental Consciousness*, Harvard University, May 30, 2017, video, 1:148:47, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_TS9VusEZg, at 18:19–18:35.
- ²² Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Land as Pedagogy,” in *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 154.
- ²³ Melynda Seaton, “An Interview with Black Ash Basket Makers Kelly Church and Reneé Wasson Dillard,” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2021), <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.12619>.
- ²⁴ Jean Merz-Edwards, “Odawa-Ojibwe-Potawatomi Basket Weaver Kelly Church,” *First American Art Magazine* 16 (Fall 2017): 48–53.
- ²⁵ Rose Miron, “Mohican Archival Activism: Narrating Indigenous Nationalism” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2018).
- ²⁶ Aaron Glass, Judith Berman, and Rainer Hatoum, “Reassembling the Social Organization: Collaboration and Digital Media in (Re)Making Boas’s 1897 Book,” *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research* 5, no. 1 (2017): 119–21.
- ²⁷ Michael Ann Holly, *The Melancholy Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
- ²⁸ James Elkins, *The End of Diversity in Art Historical Writing: North Atlantic Art History and Its Alternatives* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 11.
- ²⁹ Greg Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 51.
- ³⁰ This was the subject of the panel “Beyond Art: Respecting and Protecting the Sacred,” hosted by *First American Art Magazine* on April 25, 2022.
- ³¹ Simpson, *Land as Pedagogy*, 159.
- ³² Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 190.
- ³³ Ege Yumusak, “Where Is the University?” *The Point* 25 (August 15, 2021), <https://thepointmag.com/politics/where-is-the-university>.
- ³⁴ Robert Lee and Tristan Ahtone, “Land Grab Universities,” *High Country News*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.hcn.org/issues/52.4/indigenous-affairs-education-land-grab-universities>.
- ³⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “Making Sense: The Fields in Which We Work,” in *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 117–39. In the most insidious cases, anthropological research has undergirded and supported the administration of statecraft. See David H. Price, *Cold War Anthropology: The CIA, the Pentagon, and the Growth of Dual Use Anthropology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
- ³⁶ Hyungmin Pai has noted similarly, “It is mostly disappointing when brilliant writers who deal with the global never assume themselves to be local . . . it is easier to criticize nationalism (or any concept) when you think you are writing outside of it. It is quite another matter when you acknowledge that it swarms around you, when you understand yourself to be part of its pervasive historical fabric”; “In and Out of the Local,” in *Art and Globalization*, ed. James Elkins (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 218–21.
- ³⁷ Trouillot, “Making Sense,” 128.
- ³⁸ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

-
- ³⁹ Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Verso Books, 1998); Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*; DeLucia, *Memory Lands*.
- ⁴⁰ See Strike MoMA Working Group of International Imagination of Anti-national, Anti-imperialist Feelings (IIAAF), *Strike MoMA Reader*, n.d., <https://www.strikemoma.org/reader>; Robin Pogrebin and Elizabeth A. Harris, “Warren Kanders Quits Whitney Board After Tear Gas Protests,” *New York Times*, July 25, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/25/arts/whitney-warren-kanders-resigns.html>; Anemona Hartocollis, “Who Should Own Photos of Slaves? The Descendants, Not Harvard, a Lawsuit Says,” *New York Times*, March 20, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/20/us/slave-photographs-harvard.html>; Art Against Displacement, <https://aad.nyc>.
- ⁴¹ Jolene Rickard, “The Local and the Global,” in *Vision, Space, Desire: Global Perspectives and Cultural Hybridity* (Washington, DC: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2006), 58–67; and Sascha T. Scott, review of *Proud Raven, Panting Wolf: Carving Alaska’s New Deal Totem Parks*, by Emily L. Moore, *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2019), <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.2256>.
- ⁴² Nicole Fleetwood, *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020), especially chapter 7, “Posing in Prison,” 231–54; Alexander Nemerov, *Silent Dialogues: Diane Arbus & Howard Nemerov* (San Francisco: Fraenkel Gallery, 2015); Rebecca Zorach, *Art for People’s Sake: Artists and Community in Black Chicago, 1965–1975* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).
- ⁴³ Strike MoMA, “A Conversation with Sandy Grande, Stefano Harney, Fred Moten, Jasbir Puar, and Dylan Rodriguez,” May 28, 2021, video, 2:09:38, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2vzhwnjy4s&ab_channel=StrikeMoMA.