

Discovering Carl Beam

Political Messages in *The Columbus Project*



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Abstract

The Columbus Project by Carl Beam consists of twelve collage paintings and two sculptures. He made this in observance of the quincentenary celebrations surrounding the discovery of the American continent by Christopher Columbus. The individual art pieces in this project contribute to the collective memory of this event. It is important to know more about who Carl Beam was and why he constructed art like this. After that the messages that can be discovered throughout the art will make more sense. As a Canadian First Nation, his messages allow for a different voice in the remembered history of the American continent. The works are a combination of postmodernism, First Nation history and culture juxtaposed to that of Westerners. In addition to that the works are infused with political messages due to the imagery that is used. The work was received well by the art world in Canada and can still be viewed in many Canadian museums and art galleries today.

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Key words

Art, Aboriginal, postmodernism, collective memory, identity, history, Native American and First Nation culture, Carl Beam, Canada, art galleries, politics, imagery, Western culture.

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Introduction

Introduction

My thesis process started completely haphazardly. The topic had to be something to do with Canada. That idea had emerged from a lecture given by the Canadian Ambassador to the Netherlands, Her Excellency Mrs Sabine Nölke. The way in which she spoke of Canada, being an immigrant from Germany herself, was intriguing. Canada, other than its geographical location and mentions in the news, was unfamiliar to me and called for more investigation. The lecture was insightful because I learnt a lot about Canada's multicultural society. The most fascinating was the explanation on what terms are used to identify the indigenous population, namely; First Nation or Inuit. That was when I knew that I had to find out more about them. Different cultures have always been a source of interest to me but now I had the the chance to delve deeper into research on a topic of my choice. This lecture was given in September 2016. The thought of researching more about Canada stayed in the back of my mind. Initially, I turned to the border issue between Canada and the United States in the nineteenth century as this cuts through several lands owned by various Native tribes. I then found out that primary sources about such a specific and historical topic are hard to come by in the Netherlands. That is why my attention turned started turning to other elements open to research about Canada. Eventually, together with my supervisor Mrs Roza, I found out about an artist called Carl Beam. I had found my research topic.

Carl Beam's art appealed to me because at first glance it is a jumble of elements combined to fill a canvas. There seems to be too much to take in which is what makes looking at it so interesting. His collage paintings seem to cry out for more attention, and I could not wait to delve in and start making sense of the jumbled mess. I found Beam's website soon after starting to read up on him and looking up his work. The outline that his website provides has been what influenced the topic for this thesis. The motivation for wanting to write about Beam is that I want to try and put him on the international map of influential artists. As a Bachelor's student, this might not be entirely realistic or achievable but the I can form a base from which to continue with this research. More people over the world could enjoy his work if he was given more publicity. I found, after having finished my research, that there is much more to discover and write about his work. He was an important figure who paved the way for younger generations of Native Canadians to have their work regarded as part of mainstream contemporary art.

The reason for choosing *The Columbus Project* (1992) is that it adds a First Nation's voice to how the history of the American continent by Christopher Columbus in 1492 is often remembered and celebrated. Carlbeam.org argues that it was Beam's mission to juxtapose western and indigenous cultures to convey the other side to the dominant narratives of remembered history. The fact that he named his project as such and that it was curated for the quincentenary immediately adds a deeper layer of meaning to the celebrated history. Throughout this research I will outline my understanding of this layer and how the messages behind his work could be read. I will also go into how Beam's art adds the often positive narrative of the history of the founding of the countries on the northern American continent. Therefore, the research statement that this thesis was conducted by is how Carl Beam's *The Columbus Project* contributes to the debates about the remembered and celebrated history of the discovery of the American continent.

Literature Review

There is not a lot of scholarship written about Carl Beam or his work. There was no research available that touched upon the topic that I chose to research. That is why art books, websites from the museums that curated exhibitions and purchased his art, and the indefinite resources on the internet proved to be more helpful than articles or books written by scholars. Carl Beam's website was especially helpful as it has an overview of all of his work and an outline of his life. Other websites include that of the National Gallery of Canada and the Petersborough Art Gallery as they still have a lot of information of what exhibitions they hosted and background information on Beam's personal and professional life.

One of the sources proved especially helpful for writing about Beam's background and his art work. This source is a Master's Thesis written by Jane Horner. For her thesis she had been able to interview Beam's his wife, Ann, and daughter, Anong, in 2012. The title is *Revolving Sequential: Concepts of Time in the Art of Carl Beam (1943-2005)*, while she focused on elements to do with spatiality and time in her research, it proved helpful for filling in the gaps on Beam's background and his intentions behind his work.

In addition to making good use of the infinite opportunities that the internet provides and making sure that I checked my sources carefully, I found out about a documentary that was produced in 2010 by Paul Eichorn and Robert Waldeck. The documentary is called *Aakideh; The Art & Legacy of Carl Beam*. Unfortunately, the original documentary was not available to this me at this time but the directors released a detailed synopsis and outline that

summarized the specific content of the documentary. I was able to use some of that information from the outline of the documentary to complete the background information on Beam's art and his personal life.

As for the the paintings themselves, I found the majority on the website of the National Gallery of Canada because they own eighteen pieces of Carl Beam's art. The sources are listed under each of the images that can be found in the appendix.

Research and methodology

The relevance of my research is that not much scholarship has been written about Carl Beam's work. This insinuates that Beam is not a well known artist outside of Canada. This thesis will contribute to the understanding of what Carl Beam was trying to say with his collage art by piecing together information from museum websites, his own websites, and other scholarship on art theory. I have divided the information into three chapters, which serve to give an understanding of how to perceive Beam's work. It is important to outline how and why he made his work the way he did. To do that I have used information that was on his website and in the outline of the documentary, as well as other sources. It is important to know more about his personal background and the era in which he lived to be able to comprehend what the messages behind his work are.

As for methodologies, the reception theory that German theorist Hans Robert Jauss is often associated with, proved insightful to this research. Jauss is regarded as being one of the most important people to develop this term. Reception theory is described as being "[a] type of reader-response criticism" (Murfin and Ray 433) that looks at how work is regarded by society since its publication. Moreover, it makes a distinction between how the work was received when it was first publicized and how this work is being perceived nowadays (433). I applied this theory because in this thesis I will outline what the reception of Beam's work was in the 1980s and continue to piece together how the same art is regarded today. In addition his own reasoning behind his art has been included. One of the reasons why reception theory is a good tool is because it takes into account that viewers' perceptions and expectations change over time which enriches readings of works as newer generations add new insights or emphasize on different elements (Murfin and Ray 434). Jauss's idea behind the theory is that it allows for a continuous and ever evolving dialogue between the published work and the viewers who get to see it and respond to it (434). This is especially applicable to Carl Beam's work because my thesis will contribute my view of his work in the twenty-first

century differs and compare and contrast this to previous receptions of it, including his own intentions behind making it in the late twentieth century.

A close reading of Carl Beam's work will be provided to outline how the various elements in his collages are interrelated or juxtaposed to instill new meanings or reclaim past narratives. The narrative analysis of why he made this work is all based on my own interpretation as there was not a lot of scholarship on his work. Moreover, I was unable to find anything specifically related to the political messages that can be found in Beam's art. I am going to compare and contrast my analysis of his art to what I have read on the websites of museums that either purchased or exhibited his work.

Chapter Breakdown

My thesis has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter will revolve around Carl Beam himself because it is important to know who he was and what he accomplished in his life. This will help form an understanding about where he came from and how his upbringing influenced his artwork. This chapter will also give an overview of how his work was received by art galleries and how he helped put First Nations and other Native artists on the map in the art world in Canada.

In the second chapter, the intentions and meaning behind some of his artwork will be outlined. Here I will outline why Beam can be considered to be a postmodern and political artist. Additionally, there is a theoretical framework that provides information about the era that he worked in and context that surrounds his work so that there is a logical structure and build up toward the last chapter.

The third and final chapter is a narrative analysis of six substantial works that featured in *The Columbus Project*. Six collage paintings that can arguably be called the most politically charged have been chosen for a close reading. The work was created and curated for the 500th anniversary celebrations of the discovery of the American continent by Christopher Columbus in 1492. It was Carl Beam's intention to juxtapose Native culture to Western culture so it seems fitting that this work was chosen for the curation of an exhibition surrounding such meaningful festivities.

Finally, to finalize the research I conducted there is a detailed summary of the most important points in the conclusion of this thesis. The research statement will be answered, and there is a description of how *The Columbus Project* contributed to the historical, collective memory surrounding the quincentenary celebrations in 1992.

Chapter 1: “Aakideh”

Introduction

Five years after Carl Beam’s passing in 2005, a documentary was made in honor of his position as a renowned Canadian artist of First Nation origin. The documentary coincided with a postmortem exhibition that intended to pay tribute to his legacy as a First Nation artist. The documentary itself was unobtainable at this time but I was able to find and use a synopsis and detailed outline of what is in the film. The description of the content of the film mentions that it does not just focus on the art that Beam made, but also what his intentions were behind it, and how it came out the way it did. The document also contains an outline of how the directors chose footage of Beam at work and held interviews with his wife Ann and daughter Anongonse, or Anong. A lot of information about his career and personal life helped form a more complete overview for this chapter.

This first chapter of my research will outline the necessary information on Carl Beam to provide an understanding of why he made his work. Most importantly, it describes how his background as a First Nation and personal life can be discovered, how his work was received, and what the intended messages were of his art work. Furthermore, I will comment on his legacy and how that contributed to his status as a renowned artist today. The information needed for this comes from the websites of the museums and art galleries that hosted his work for exhibitions or purchased it for their collection. Subsequently, I have also looked at the mandates of the various museums and pieced together why Beam’s work fits into their mission or identity. Another source that proved helpful to complete the information was a website dedicated to the artist; CarlBeam.org.

Personal life and heritage

Carl Beam was born in 1943 on West Bay, now called M’Chigeeng, on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, into an Ojibwe community. I came across three different ways to spell his First Nation’s origin. The varieties are; Ojibwe, Ojibwa, and Ojibway but more sources indicated to the first being the preferred spelling and the latter being the Anglicized version of it. For this reason the first variation will be used throughout this thesis. Beam’s mother was Ojibwe and his father was an American, who fought in World War II and died as a prisoner of war in a German war camp (Horner 25). The elders in the community recognized certain character traits in Beam when he was a child, which resulted in them giving him the Native name

Aakideh, meaning ‘one who is brave’ or ‘brave-heart.’ This trait would later on become an important part of his career because he infused his work with messages that questioned collective memory. As a child Beam was sent to Garnier residential school in Spanish, Ontario, which was about 80 miles from his hometown. This was a common occurrence for Native children who grew up in the 1950s. The school caused him to forget much of the Ojibwe language and culture. Personally, Beam felt that these schools were to blame for the major cultural losses that generations of Native peoples have suffered through. Beam’s experience in the residential school and the struggles that First Nations faced in trying to maintain their many cultures and languages would also come to play a large role in his artworks.

In 1974, he received a Bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts from the University of Victoria. He enrolled in a Master’s of Fine Arts program at the University of Alberta, but did not finish it. At the University of Victoria, Beam became interested in printmaking and grew to be quite innovative in using the technique (Horner 26). The dominant style of art that was produced in the 1950s was abstract expressionism. Beam’s professors were part of a reaction against this form of art and this inspired him (26). During his studies he was also acquainted with other artists who inspired him and work from others that he connected to. One of these artists was Pablo Picasso’s cubist work (1881-1973) because it invited viewers to change their perceptions by offering multiple points of view. Another was Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) due to his ability to go beyond the restrictions of a canvas. A third source of inspiration was the German performance artist Joseph Beuys for challenging traditional art forms (27). It is undoubtable that Beam was familiarized with the encaustic work of Jasper Johns (b. 1930) throughout his studies. Johns art work often hides or subverts messages and this is something that can be found in Beam’s printed works as well. Lastly, the work of Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) is said to have a source of influence for Beam because some of his collage art shows similarities to that of Rauschenberg’s. In addition to Beam finding a source of inspiration in this art, Rauschenberg also later on in his life revealed to be of part Cherokee heritage and was similarly interested in various cultures (29). Beam committed to being a full-time artist in 1978 and attended a National Native Artists conference on Manitoulin Island. While attending this conference, he met with other Ojibwe artists and realized that their art was often mythological and collective. Beam himself, however, was more interested in producing subjective and political work (30).

In addition to printmaking and his interest in various cultures, he learned to master the Anasazi pottery technique in the 1980s and applied this technique ten years later in earth architecture as he became involved in the construction of ecological buildings on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. What exactly the Anasazi technique entails and how Beam applied it in both pottery and architecture will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Beam became a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 2000 and was one of the recipients of a 2005 Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts. The artist passed away on the thirtieth of July 2005, he was 62 years old.

Career

Beam was a versatile artist and this shows throughout his career. He mastered pottery, made collage painting works, played the guitar and was passionate about Blues, and became involved in ecological issues. He used his skills as an artist to draw attention to environmentally-friendly and 'green' living. These traits have been sources of inspiration for his work and gave it another layer of meaning. It is also important to know how the work was received by society and art critics because this adds to his legacy.

As aforementioned, one of the forms of art that Beam mastered was the Anasazi pottery technique which derives its name from a region in the South-West of the United States (Image 1). The pottery is unique due to the predominantly white, gray, and red colors, a "coil-and-scrape manufacturing technique, and a relatively independent stylistics trajectory" (Blinman 14). In other words, the work can be recognized easily because of its individual and recognizable qualities. Most of the pottery that has been found on archeological sites in the area date back to 200 A.D and seem to have been constructed from floodplain or soil clays. These materials are high in iron content which would explain the brown color (Blinman 15). Most pottery was found in the area of northern New Mexico, which is why Beam went there to learn how to master the technique. Before long, Beam's attention shifted from wanting to know how the pottery was created by, and what purpose it served to, the Mesoamerican peoples to how the technique could be used in other areas of art and construction. He was aware that the Native Americans had applied the skill to other areas of their lives as well (22). Beam was especially interested in how to use these earthly materials because he wanted to apply the pottery skill to building an ecological house on his home island of Manitoulin, Ontario. In addition to that he wanted to be able to use the technique to make his own ceramics. According to the website artsask.ca, Beam felt strongly

that nature had to be respected. Therefore the Anasazi techniques would prove useful as they allowed him to use local and natural materials for construction. This led to him and his family returning to Manitoulin where he built an adobe house that reflected his respect of everything natural and his interest in sustainable living. An adobe house is a small, simple structure that is thermally-efficient and built completely out of materials that were found on-site (Hart). His Master potter teacher in New Mexico taught him and his wife Ann, how to find the right clay and apply the technique. Soon after that, they started producing bowls that combined Anasazi designs with contemporary imagery to infuse the ceramics with political messages (Image 2). These bowls were exhibited in the University of New Mexico's Maxwell Museum in 1982 (Horner 30).

Carl Beam was able to "create meaning by juxtaposing symbols of events from different eras" (1). What this means is that he used photographs or images from historic and contemporary sources and combined them into a piece of art. By doing this he created different messages because he collapsed historical events and drew paradoxical lines between them. He wanted to draw the viewers' attention to a continuous dialogue "about Native history and culture, Western science, current events, and the power of imagination" (15). It is key for the viewers to have a basic understanding of Native culture to grasp the intended meaning of certain elements in Beam's work.

Previously, art made by artists with a Native heritage was often regarded as craft or ethnography. Few artists who wanted their work to reach a larger audience would willingly identify themselves as Native because they were worried that their work would not be taken seriously. They were also unwilling to have their heritage filter through in their work. Beam was part of a movement of emerging Canadian Native artists (20). Interest in Native art in museums in Canada started in the 1970s with museums now purchasing from artists who openly identified as Native. Their work was still being treated as indigenous, not contemporary art. This changed during the 1980s as the number of Native Canadian artists who graduated from Fine Arts programs increased and more galleries and museums started becoming interested in different forms of art made by Native peoples (22). In 1984, Elizabeth McLuhan curated a solo exhibition of Beam's work called *Altered Egos: The Multi-Media Work of Carl Beam* in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Two years later the National Gallery of Canada purchased *The North American Iceberg* (Image 3) to display in the museum as part of their collection (23). Carl Beam became the first Native Canadian artist whose work was

purchased by a museum or art gallery and added to the permanent collection of contemporary art instead of indigenous art (carlbeam.com).

Museum exhibitions

According to the website of the La Parete Gallery, which specializes in Canadian Fine Art, Beam's work has featured in more than fifty solo exhibitions between 1982 and 2005 and at least three posthumous exhibitions from 2006 until 2011.

The first exhibition of Beam's work was in the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, University of New Mexico and featured both his and his wife's ceramics. The exhibition was called *The Painted Pottery of Ann and Carl Beam* and took place in 1982. The museum has deleted the detailed information about the exhibition from their website. However, it is their mission "to increase knowledge and understanding of the human cultural experience across time and space," which explains why they would curate an exhibition on Carl Beam's ceramics. They fit right into what the museum stands for because he blended the ancient technique of the Anasazi with modern imagery as well as his Native heritage to educate.

Beam's first solo exhibition was in 1984 when the Thunder Bay Art Gallery commissioned him to make works for them. The exhibition was called *Altered Egos; The Multi-Media Artwork of Carl Beam*, curated by Elizabeth McLuhan. This was a significant exhibition because it was the first museum to commission and exhibit his work. The mission of the museum is to exhibit, collect, and interpret art "with a particular focus on the contemporary artwork of Canadian Aboriginal and Northwestern Ontario artists" (Website Thunder Bay Art Gallery). The Gallery claims to be the only public art gallery of their kind and wants to "enhance the visual arts experience of the people of Northwestern Ontario." I believe Carl Beam was the perfect candidate to produce a work for them because he is the embodiment of everything they stand for. He was from Ontario, of First Nation descent, and produced work that has an educational intent.

Throughout the 1980s, Beam worked on a large body of work which he called *The Columbus Project* and it was created in observance of the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the American continent by Christopher Columbus. The project included a nearly 20-foot sculpture of Columbus' ship Santa Maria, called *Voyage* (Image 4) and was first featured at the ArtSpace Gallery in 1988. It fit into the identity of the museum because they offer artists the opportunity "to engage and inform the public about their work." (Website ArtSpace Gallery). The National Gallery of Canada curated an exhibition called *Land Spirit Power* in

1992, which included Beam's works titled *Burying the Ruler* (Image 5) and the *Columbus Chronicles* (Image 6). This work fits into the identity of the museum because their mandate is: "[t]o enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity" This is precisely what Carl Beam intended to do with his work for the Columbus quincentenary by offering work infused with messages that suggest a different historical narrative.

Another meaningful exhibition called *The Whale of our Being* was curated by Joan Murray for the National Gallery of Canada in 2001 and was a reaction to Beam trying to find a way to express his feelings of emptiness (Horner 32). He did this in response to the terrorist attacks on 9 September 2001 and chose the whale as "a metaphor for both the earth and humanity" (32). This again fits into the mission of the museum to offer an understanding of various people's experiences of events. The National Gallery proceeded to curate a postmortem exhibition in 2010 to honor the legacy of Beam's work. This was done to show his importance as a First Nation Canadian artist and "opening the door for a new generation of First Nations artists to enter" (Website: The National Gallery of Canada). The exhibition featured over forty different works of art to commemorate Beam's life and career as an influential First Nations artist. It featured various projects that Beam had created throughout his lifetime; including paintings, ceramics, sculptures, and the biographical documentary *Aakideh; The Art and Legacy of Carl Beam*.

Reception of the artworks

Aside from information that remains in archives of museum websites, much of it has since been removed or made unavailable. The information that has remained helped shape an idea of the general reception of Beam's work during the 1980s. It contributed to understanding why Beam's legacy as an influential artists remains.

According to the Carl Beam website, the National Gallery's retrospective exhibition in 2010 proved Beam's status as an important Canadian artists. As aforementioned he was the first artist with a Native background to have his work purchased as contemporary art. This shows that his work was highly regarded and taken seriously. It marked "the beginning of a new relationship between the National Gallery and Canada's Aboriginal arts community" (Ryan). What that means is positive for Beam himself, but also significant for any later Native artists because their work was now being considered as contemporary art. In addition

to exhibitions that proved the contributions his work had, he was elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts 2000 and was awarded the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts in 2005. Awards like this confirm the importance of an artist.

Today

Carl Beam's legacy is that of one of the most notable artists in Canada. It has been immortalized in the documentary made after he passed away and in the work that museums purchased from him to keep and display in their permanent collections. People can go and see his work in museums in Canada and his family is working to keep his legacy alive through their websites and art. Although there is not yet much scholarship about his work, it can be argued that Beam's work has had an impact in the art world in Canada.

Conclusion

This chapter is important for my thesis as it provides a basic overview of Carl Beam's personal and professional life. His heritage as both a First Nation and an artist and has formed the basis for the next two chapters where I will go into the works he made. It shows that, through various art forms, Beam left his mark on the Canadian art scene. At the same time he helped put Native artists on the map as part of mainstream contemporary art. The museums that exhibited some of his artwork had good reason to do so as it fits into their collections and the mandates they strive to uphold. Beam was a skillful artist involved in many different styles and fields of the art scene. Information regarding his work can still be accessed today as part of permanent collections on websites of art galleries and online on his own website. Consequently, this chapter paved the way for the next part of my thesis when the specific art works he made for the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the American continent by Christopher Columbus will be discussed in more detail.

Chapter 2: The Artist and The Individual

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined Carl Beam's career and how he became regarded as a contemporary artist of First Nation heritage. He paved the way for other First Nation artists who came after him and produced contemporary art as well. Their work would slowly but surely become recognized as part of mainstream art. This chapter will provide an overview of elements in his works that contributed to this image. Art books proved helpful to present an overview of what was considered as mainstream art in the 1980s and 1990s and how Beam's work relates to it. Perhaps most importantly, Beam's collage art can be considered as postmodern. In addition to that it is valuable to go over the various stylistic approaches in his work and how his work can be related to other artists of the time. He used his Native heritage to create new meaning in his art and give it political and educational messages. That is why this chapter will provide an outline of why and how his work fit into the time and the messages it sent. Most of the collage paintings used to analyze how Beam fits into the contemporary art scene of the time come from *The Columbus Project*. This project is sometimes also referred to as *The Columbus Suite*, or *The Columbus Chronicle* and was made for the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's discovery of the American continent. There are twelve collage paintings and two sculptures that Beam started making throughout the 1980s and collectivized in 1992 to exhibit.

Postmodernism and Beam

Carl Beam can be considered as contemporary postmodernist art. The fact that Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) was a source of inspiration to him adds to this argument (Carl Beam website). Elements of postmodernism will be presented here and pointed out in the works of *The Columbus Project*. Postmodernism is not explained in one easy way but important to understand for this research.

Postmodernism developed as a reaction to modernism in the mid-twentieth century and deconstructed "what was perceived as the narrowness and arbitrariness of modernism" (Pohl 540). Artists felt that there should be more focus on searching for the "essence of individual media" and therefore they challenged "privileged art styles, media, and subject matter" (540). Instead they chose to emphasize "a plurality that overturned inherited hierarchies and criteria of judgment" (540). What this means is that they broke

away from the dominance of modernism and chose to focus on more contemporary, social issues. In the United States, the era after World War II was tumultuous and this became the base for the postmodern artists' work as they chose to use the political and economical difficulties that the United States had to deal with throughout the Cold War to their advantage and used it to make their art more influential. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s there was enough evidence in everyday society that showed the economic and military vulnerability of the United States; the Vietnam War, American Indian Movement at the second Wounded Knee, an oil embargo from the Middle East, the economy stagnated, the Civil Rights Movement, and the impeachment of President Nixon come to mind. Society itself was divided and mass media, such as newspapers and television, added to the feelings of detachment from government and people being anxious about the future (Pohl 540). All of these developments filtered into the start of postmodern art, and with it came "a sense of loss, exhaustion, arbitrariness and irony, [a] play with the surfaces and fragments of an old order and suspicion of passion and politics" (540). Interestingly, Beam's work pictures the turmoil that the United States dealt with, not Canada. He may have lived in the South-West for a short while during the 1980s, but he is a Canadian First Nation.

So on the one hand postmodernism broke away from modernism, but on the other hand it "continued to promote several concepts central to the art world within which modernism flourished" (540). While postmodernist artists focused on contemporary social issues and wanted to overhaul the modernistic approach, they still desired to be unique and reject previous art styles. Modernists stuck to the same style of art for a long period of time and postmodernists did this less (540-541). They kept trying to find new ways to express themselves through their art. Similar to modernists, the postmodern artists were still regarded as talented artists. In contrast to the modernist reputation of being isolated and distanced, they were perceived as young and ambitious and looking for new ways to find their place on the art market. The most successful postmodernists were young men who reaped their successes much earlier on in their careers because the new youth counterculture valued a more varied form of art (541). Postmodernism has also been explained by some art critics as a stylistic and theoretical overhaul of modernism's most formal developments (541). In other words, to the modernist the process of creation was more important than the product. The postmodernists turned this around; the product and its historical framework formed the essence of the art. They used a variety of art styles and medial images to give them new

meaning (541). This particular trait of postmodernism - reusing images and medial images in different contexts to create new meaning - is evident in Carl Beam's collage art.

Pohl considers reusing various art styles and medial images in different contexts is at the core of postmodernism. Barry, however, argues differently. To him, postmodernism is a mix of 'high', e.g. sophisticated or educated art, and 'low' art, such as comics; both must be present and placed in contrast with each other. He argues that for postmodernist artists this fragmentation provided a release from "the claustrophobic embrace of fixed systems of belief" (81). By doing so, they produce a mixture that consists of different styles and from different time periods. This invites their audience to examine their work from different perspectives and explore other narratives. This insinuates that there is no definite, single end to history or a subject (83). Carl Beam offers this by juxtaposing contemporary cultural issues to historical and traditional Native values.

To summarize, postmodernism was an art form that arose in a time of social unrest, mainly concerned with contemporary social issues. It wanted to react against modernism but was heavily influenced by it; concerning itself with turning the modernistic approach upside-down. All of these typically postmodern traits - a focus on social issues, reusing art styles and images from mass media in different contexts to create new meaning, blurring the lines between 'high' and 'low' art, and creating different styles spread across time periods - can be found in Carl Beam's collage paintings. He was focused on social issues, like environmental concerns, and maintaining Native culture. He kept adding new techniques to his repertoire, i.e. his Anasazi pottery. Furthermore, he combined old photographs with new ones and used different color schemes throughout. By doing this he combined high art - painting - with low art - photographs -.

Beam's stylistic approach

When analyzing art, it is important to take a close look at the stylistic approach and its contexts. Carl Beam's collage works are predominantly postmodernist in style. His use of different colors and the boundaries between the images convey a message. He combines materials from newspapers, personal photographs, influential American characters, and spiritual Native history in collages he infuses the works with a discourse that the audience can read.

The work bears similarities to that of Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) and Jasper Johns (b. 1930) because they were sources of inspiration to Beam. Both Rauschenberg and

Johns reacted against Abstract Expressionism art that dominated the American art world throughout the 1950s. Both created works of art that reacted to domestic and international crises during the Cold War (Pohl 461). They created a new style of painting through which they conveyed underlying messages. Johns did so by inverting everyday objects and explicitly leaving out the human component; thereby creating a sense of human absence (Steinberg 224). Rauschenberg made use of mass media products, such as newspaper articles or photographs, to create a seemingly, yet secretly politically charged, jumble.

John's way of hiding messages by changing perspectives in his work and Rauschenberg's assemblages proved inspirational to Beam. Moreover, he was attracted to the idea of an ongoing conversation which Johns and Rauschenberg seemed to be having through their works. In some of their works; for instance John's *Flag* (Image 7) and Rauschenberg's *Bed* (Image 8), a dialogue can be discovered about societal issues, such as femininity and homosexuality (Pohl 476). Both artists "continued to exchange ideas ... to create mixed-media works and paintings that called attention to art world discourses about ... content, in particular the dictum that painters must focus on the 'essence' of painting" (479). Beam's content may differ from theirs but his work arguably calls attention to the discourses of art critics.

Beam used 'collage' to create his works, "a technique involving attaching various materials - cardboard, string, fabric, newspaper clippings, etc. - to a canvas or board, sometimes combined with painting or drawing" (595). Rauschenberg coined the term 'combine', which "describes an extension of the principle of collage, in that flat or three-dimensional found objects are attached to the surface of the composition, and are either painted over or left in their natural state" (595). This applies to Beam's work. To make his art he used a variety of materials and techniques; *The North American Iceberg* is made using acrylic paint, photo-serigraph, and graphite on plexiglas, while *The Unexplained* is created out of photo emulsion and mixed media on canvas.

Beam took from Johns' and Rauschenberg's work what he appreciated and developed his own style from there.

First Nations background and Political Messages

Carl Beam grew up in a First Nations' community on Manitoulin Island in Canada. He blamed the residential schools for the loss of Natives cultures and languages. Beam himself was keenly interested in many other cultures and this shows in his artwork through the

images he uses. His Ojibwe heritage can be found throughout his art. In most of the paintings he uses animals that have significant spiritual values for Natives; such as a turtle, deer, bear, or whale. According to the online Canadian encyclopedia, the Ojibwe were ‘animistic’ which means that the earth upon which they reside is filled with benign and malevolent spirits that require specific rituals to honor or please. As first encounters with westerners led to the decline of their traditions and spiritual life, the Ojibwe autonomy decreased considerably but to this day they remain active in both politics and culture. Carl Beam’s work proves this because he combines the spiritual, cultural, and political.

Whenever Beam chose to use images of Natives he depicts them in mostly traditional dress; feathers, beaded jewelry, long hair that is often in braids, and warpaint. In *The North American Iceberg* (Image 3) Beam uses the images of what many believe an ‘Indian’ should look like and juxtaposes that to a man in a suit; the westerner. His paintings called *Z* (Image 9) and another called *The Problematical Theoretical* (Image 10) are an example of the critique Beam offered on how westerners regarded the cultural differences. The works depict portraits of Natives dressed in ‘Indian clothing’ on the background of what appears to be a reference to the official letters that were sent to them to go to boarding schools to be ‘civilized.’ In the same year he made another work by the name of *The Problematical Theoretical No. 2* (Image 11), the sequel. The men in the background could be the same Native men only in western clothing. They are holding letters which appear to be their boarding school diplomas. Basically, these two works together form a story that has to be read in sequence. The story they tell is about how the Natives went into the western boarding schools and came out changed, having lost their cultures.

In addition to the people ‘looking’ Native; the materials, background, and subjects in most of his artworks resemble his background. The canoes in *The North American Iceberg*, the tipis in *Only Poetry Remains* (Image 12), or the bear in *Time Warp* (Image 13) are examples of things -creatures in this case, that are considered to be part of a Native heritage and could have spiritual values to many tribes. One of the most important things I found is in the work called *Originator No. 2* (Image 14). This is a picture of a turtle. The original people referred to North America as a turtle island because it is shaped as such; Florida and Baja California being its legs and Mexico its tail (Callahan). The turtle, then, represents the continent. The lines that cross through it resemble official letters that the western immigrants brought with them to the continent taking over the lands as if they had been empty.

Disregarding the Native peoples who were already living there in respect of the turtle, or continent.

According to the artist's description page of the website of the National Gallery of Canada, Carl Beam used different types of media "to visually bring together subjects and events from different historical moments that he infuses with political commentary." His own website adds that his art compares and contrasts symbols of Native spirituality and naturalism, and the contemporary political scenes to create his own messages. Beam himself described it as follows: "My works are like little puzzles, interesting little games. I play a game of dreaming ourselves as each other. In this we find out that we're all basically human... My work is not fabricated for the art market. There's no market for intellectual puzzles or works of spiritual emancipation." Meaning that he did not make his work specifically for art galleries but intended it to convey messages that offered different perspectives to each viewer. His work explores tensions between western and Native relations and draws attention to the problems that affect contemporary Native cultures and how they relate to global problems. These problems concern the environment, violence, and a rethinking of the narratives of remembered history (National Gallery of Canada). Many of his collages feature American people who, as the website of the Art Gallery of Ontario describes, are "among history's most epically martyred, persecuted and exiled - Jesus Christ, Louis Riel, Sitting Bull, Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King and John Kennedy." These characters feature in the works Beam made for *The Columbus Project*.

Beam does not just convey this political and cultural meaning in his collage paintings. He also built a sustainable house using the Anasazi technique which shows that he was concerned about the environment. Furthermore, the ceramics are all made with natural materials and techniques and have the same collage style imagery to bring his political messages across. His 1984 bowl *Re-Alignment 1984* (Image 2), is an example of a political reaction. He made it after George H.W. Bush, the fourth Republican President in a row was elected to take office, signaling a change in the American Party system (Phillips).

Beam juxtaposes the indigenous and the western cultures and experiences and by doing so creates a new meaning open to the interpretation of the audience. He wanted his work to have a political message and by combining well-known images of 'American Greats' he made it more recognizable and easier to read for more people in society. It is safe to say that he was successful in lacing his work with political and cultural messages that expressed his personal view while simultaneously linking it to more global issues.

Chapter 3: The Columbus Project

Introduction

This final chapter focuses solely on what *The Columbus Project* entailed and how elements of what was discussed in the first two chapters can be found in the art. The work was made and curated in ‘honor’ of the anniversary of the discovery of the continent by Columbus. The project is made up of twelve individual pieces of collage art that Beam made and completed before the celebrations started in 1992. The twelve pieces vary depending on which museum it was curated at. In addition there were also sculptures that were made part of the exhibition at some museums. The collages that seem to convey the most meaningful messages and have the most important messages behind them. It is interesting to analyze why he would make such works for the quincentenary.

There were three separate names for the exhibition; *The Columbus Suite*, *The Columbus Project*, and *The Columbus Chronicle*. The second term has been used throughout this thesis because that suits the exhibition best because the collages were all made as separate projects. One of these works bears the name *Chronicle*, so to use that name for the exhibition as well, would have been confusing. As for the *Suite* option, this is a part of the project itself. A suite could refer to the cabin of Columbus’ ship the Santa Maria with which he sailed to the American continent, or it could be a reference to a series of events. In that case it could also refer to the series of voyages that Columbus made to bring both people, animals, and products. Lastly, it could also be a term used to describe the project itself because the curated exhibition featured in multiple museums across Canada and it is made up of various items.

Subsequently, this chapter will analyze some of the works that were attributed to *The Columbus Project* and give a detailed description of how and why he chose to use the images and what messages the combination of them sends. There will also be an overview of how Carl Beam’s work was received by the art world and what sort of legacy he left behind after his death in 2005.

Elements of postmodernism

Carl Beam’s art has elements of American culture, his First Nations’ heritage, and postmodernism. It is important to point to which characteristics of it return in the collages that are part of *The Columbus Project*. This will allow for a better analysis of the messages this could send. Carl Beam is a postmodern artist and the theoretical framework provided in

the last chapter will prove helpful to explain why. The same theories will be used to point out where this is found in the works Beam made for *The Columbus Project*.

Firstly, Carl Beam chose to focus on social issues and picked images that were circulated by mass media. While his style might be similar to that of Rauschenberg, Beam brings a unique element to his art by drawing from his Native heritage and thus creates a unique new form of art that rejects previously used styles that were common in the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, by using portraits of himself in some of the pieces, he allows for a more self-reflective work that is personal and important to convey the fact that whatever the message, it is his own. In the piece called *Portrait of John Wayne, Probably* (Image 16) this is immediately visible because the whole collage is of pictures of himself from different stages in his life. In addition it also shows how he grew up, questioning who he was and what he should be. This is a part of the Ojibwe culture as the journey of growing up is considered to be more important than what is achieved by anyone individually (Nokomis). That could have been one of the ways in which he gave his work the historical and cultural framework that is associated with postmodern art. Another important element that returns in the collages, that can be associated with postmodernism is the mixing of images and in doing so, rejecting the difference between 'high' and 'low' art because the images make for a distorted time- and stylistic framework. This blending shows that there is not one clearly defined narrative of history, but simply various remembered ones and that growing up determines what narrative an individual will remember. Finally, by drawing upon mass media imagery and combining that with other cultural and historical elements, he has cut through distinctions that clearly separate the real from the imagined and instead blurs the lines to create a 'hyperreality.' Hyperreality does not mean that it is no longer true, it has simply provided a reference point for Beam to put emphasis on the social issues that were most pressing to him; the collective memory surrounding the discovery of the American continent.

The messages

The website of the Art Gallery of Ontario has an entry that states that the individuals that Beam uses in his work "are invariably upright; never gratuitously degraded, distorted or defaced," which is something that is easily spotted. The article continues by naming the individuals. Most of the people Beam uses are indeed examples of "history's most epically martyred, persecuted and exiled," and that his using them together in these meaningful works recuperates them in a sense. By using these characters Beam creates a message in which he

points to “unresolved cultural struggles pertaining to race,” but this is not necessarily the whole reason behind using them (Art Gallery of Ontario). In fact, Beam could have chosen some of them show how they are remembered in the narrative of mainstream, predominantly white, North America juxtaposed to how Natives would remember them or prefer to see them remembered. An example of such a character can be found in *Lincoln and Ravens* (Image 17), and *The Unexplained* (Image 18). *Lincoln and Ravens* as the name explains, is a portrait of Abraham Lincoln combined with images of ravens. Ravens in Native culture are often associated with myths or death (Nokomis), which allows for ambiguity in the message of this work. On the one hand, Lincoln did a lot of good for minorities, including the Emancipation Proclamation which freed African Americans from slavery. This deed added to the myth that surrounds his character as a savior of the bonded people. On the other hand, Lincoln was also responsible for the sentence and execution of hundreds of Native Americans after the Indian Wars in 1862 and this might be a more accurate reason for why Beam chose to put a photo of ravens under the portrait of Lincoln (Striner 65).

The Unexplained is similarly ambiguous. The main character in this collage is Jesus Christ, the holy son of the Christian religion. Christianity was brought to the continent when the Europeans immigrated. The boarding schools they created later to ‘civilize’ the Natives would teach Christian religion as well and disregard that of the Native children (Davis 20). Beam himself went to such a boarding school and did not like how the Native heritage was taken from them. The education he was given there left him searching for his identity for most of his life. Therefore one of the messages that he potentially tried to convey through this collage is the suffering of Christ compared to that of Natives. It makes sense because many Natives throughout history have died for their people as well (Striner 65). An important thing to take into consideration is that the person in the two photos on the top of the painting are the same. The person is in fact Beam himself with a bag over his head. He uses the same photo in the middle in *Self-Portrait as John Wayne, Probably*. Seeing this photo come back in both paintings and the cover over his head could imply that often people ‘turn a blind eye’ to many pressing societal issues. Most importantly however Natives have historically not been treated well and this was disregarded because they had to conform to the English standard of civilization (Davis 20). Similarly, it can imply that due to the immigrants and boarding schools, Natives have had to disregard their identities by letting go of their beliefs, rituals, and religions.

The Art Gallery of Ontario argues that by using photos of himself in *Self-Portrait as John Wayne, Probably* “embodies Beam’s basic lifelong dilemma, the recuperation of native knowledge and identity from the insidiously alluring, ingrained mythologies of the conquerors.” That is a strong argument to make about this painting and the messages it conveys. It would explain why he then made this for the ‘celebration’ of the discovery of the continent by Columbus. One of the paintings that continues with a message about the continent of North America is *New World* (Image 15). Once again the main subject in the middle of the painting is a turtle and represents the continent in Ojibwe culture. However, compared to the other painting he with the turtle; *The Originator* (Image 14), this one is darker. In fact it seems broken and something dark is dripping down from the top of the picture and the outlines of the map of the continent are somewhat visible from behind the turtle. Additionally, there is a door in the right lower corner of the painting. The whole painting screams destruction and darkness; the dark ‘stuff’ that trickles down could be a reference to the bloodshed that Natives have faced since the immigrants landed. The lines are seemingly washing away the borders of the lower half of the continent. The prison door looks like a barred prison door keeping the Native peoples in and forced to conform to the newcomers. Out of all the pieces curated for *The Columbus Project*, this one is among the darkest, but also the most spiritual.

The next painting that has both Native spiritual and cultural connotations is called *Sitting Bull and Whale* (Image 19). Arguably, *Sitting Bull* represents Native culture in general and the whale is a reference to both the spiritual animals of Native culture and heritage as well as Beam’s personal message concerning the environment. In the collage, *Sitting Bull*’s portrait is red and larger than the picture of the whale that is being slaughtered. In addition the photo of the whale is dark. This painting could be Beam’s judgment in the sense that Natives do not approve of the killing of nature’s beings. The reason for picking *Sitting Bull* as the main character could be due to the fact that he led his people in an uprising against the white people in 1876 at Little Big Horn. He is also a widely recognized as a heroic person who held his ground and fought for what he believed in, instead of accepting the constant pressure and threat of the westerners (Young 236).

The last collage painting of the exhibition that conveys strong political messages to the public is *King and Kennedy* (Image 20). The images are of the faces of assassinated President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr as the title already implies. King’s face takes up the largest portion of the work while Kennedy is shown on the right looking towards

the viewer, and on the left looking at himself. This is the most ominous looking work. The top left corner of the painting is cut like a half-circle with lines oozing down. Both men in the painting were assassinated so the damaged upper left corner could represent a bullet hole with blood streaming down from it. It covers half of King's face and one of the pictures of Kennedy. Beam could have chosen to portray King because he became a beacon of hope for many people in the struggle for Civil Rights and he was committed to fighting for what he believed in. Moreover, African Americans were brought over to the newly settled American continent as slaves, so perhaps Beam also took this photo to symbolize a shared history of oppression. Arguably, he chose Kennedy in this work because he had laid the foundations for the "greatest civil rights revolution since the Civil War" (Perry 459). A link can be drawn between this work and *Lincoln and Ravens*. Both presidents had major impacts on legislation that sought to improve the relations between Western culture and oppressed people of different races and ethnicities.

These six works of *The Columbus Project* to convey meaningful and ambiguous messages surrounding the 500th anniversary celebrations of Columbus' discovery, in 1992. It makes sense that Carl Beam as a First Nation, having been to boarding school and personally experiencing the quest for an identity would make works that are infused with elements that juxtapose Western and Native culture, suffering, and politics. The images he uses are easily recognizable because they are American icons. The only reason why he would potentially choose Americans instead of Canadians is that the people he chose have had a lasting impact on history that is taught and recognized worldwide. Although this does still raise the following question; why did he not include memorable characters from Canada?

Impact of the work

Most art critics' analyses of Beam's work were positive about what he had made and how he made it. Wan says that his work was purchased by and featured in many of Canada's major museums because they recognized his important contributions to the art world. Moreover, she believes he "earned the reputation for being 'fearless, visionary, and ultimately, unforgettable' in his work and that this was shown by awarding him with the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts. Goddard adds to this argument that Carl Beam should be considered as "the archetypal Canadian contemporary visual artist, the poster boy for the politically correct Canadian dream détente between aboriginal and European cultures." Another review comments on the personal imagery that Beam infused his work with and describes the art as

“a visual vocabulary of signs, symbols and images culled from family photo albums, academic journals, mass media publications and traditional Aboriginal art forms. In varying formats he combines and recombines visual and textual fragments from the past and present to interrogate history and illuminate contemporary experience” (Ryan). Furthermore, Ryan calls Beam’s work poetic and praises his skill for opening up dialogues between different cultures and peoples.

Wan also quotes Heather Smith, curator of the exhibition at the Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery in 2012 that “Beam, along with many other people whose ancestors were indigenous to North America, was annoyed at the representation of history from [the] European perspective.” Wan herself adds that the work was a “response to the irony of the 500th anniversary celebration of the European ‘discovery’.” This makes sense because the messages in the art work are about reclaiming the collective narrated memory of how ‘good’ the discovery was. That narrative disregards the fact that it was not good for the Native peoples. The fact that Carl Beam’s legacy lives on attests to the point the critics are making that he paved the way for a newer generation of First Nation and Native American artists . While at the same time he tried to convey to society that there are multiple ways of telling and remembering history.

Conclusion

Summary

Carl Beam is a postmodern contemporary artist with a First Nation background and managed to draw upon various elements to create eclectic mixes in his collages. The works presented a near inexhaustible source of information that could be analyzed. He grew up in an Ojibwe community on Manitoulin island in Ontario, Canada. As a child Beam was sent to a residential school far from his home that caused him to lose much of his heritage. Throughout his life he did remain interested in his own culture but also others. He continued his studies and received a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts and started a Master's degree. During his studies he became acquainted with the postmodern works of artists Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg and they provided a source of inspiration for his own art.

The impact Carl Beam had on the art world was fantastic and paved the way for other First Nations to now finally be regarded as contemporary artists and not just Indigenous. He was not interested in producing indigenous art but wanted to include messages that critiqued social and political issues. In addition he became interested in environmental concerns and green living. Beam was a versatile artist. Besides collage paintings he also mastered the Anasazi pottery technique to make ceramics, and he produced a number of sculptures. The Anasazi technique offered him an opportunity to realize his ecological living ideal. He was able to use products from nature to make things, including an adobe house on his home island.

Beam is regarded as an influential artist because he was the first Native to have work purchased by the National Gallery of Canada for their contemporary art collection; *The North American Iceberg* was purchased from him in 1985. This allowed for First Nation artists to be taken more seriously, instead of simply indigenous. Many other museums and art galleries in Canada have curated exhibitions of his work. The most controversial being *The Columbus Project*. This project varied per museum but generally included twelve collage paintings and two sculptures. It was created for the quincentenary of the discovery of the American continent. The collages in this work juxtapose Western culture to that of Natives and offer a new perspective on the collectively remembered, and predominantly positive, remembered history of Columbus coming to the Americas. As an artist with First Nation heritage, the new immigrants were responsible for centuries of suffering and oppression to his ancestors, but this is often disregarded.

By using a variety of images and photos from mass media, Beam infused his work with political messages and invites the audience to see a different point of view. This combination of different techniques and art styles in the collage paintings allow for his work to be called postmodern. The most visible aspect of postmodernism - the combination of 'high' and 'low' art, offering multiple narratives, and fragmentation - are present throughout the art. Stylistically, Beam's work bears similarities to that of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. Johns' hidden messages conveyed through everyday objects and Rauschenberg's use of mass media imagery can be found in the art Beam created. Furthermore, Beam infused his work with elements from his First Nation's background, for example by using animals that have spiritual value to the Ojibwe. This can most clearly be seen in *The Originator*, and *New World* where he used the turtle to represent the American continent.

The main body of work that featured in this research was *The Columbus Project*. Six collages that arguably convey the most politically charged messages were analyzed. All six works make use of characters and images that can easily be recognized and have had an impact on the way society was formed. The characters include Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King jr., and Jesus Christ. By also using photos of himself in works such as *Portrait of John Wayne*, *Probably* and *The Unexplained*, he added an element of self-reflection; common again in postmodernist work. The collages can be interpreted in different ways even though he must have had a specific intention for each. The impact this project had was elevated because he was of First Nation descent and his ancestors have suffered from the discovery.

Subsequently, Beam's art was well received and critically acclaimed at the time. Most critics recognized the impact his art had on the contemporary art scene and that it added a new voice regarding various societal issues. The fact that he was awarded and recognized for his versatility adds to his personality and importance as an artists. Beam died in 2005 but his legacy remains to this day.

Answer to the Research Question

The research question that formed the base for this thesis was; How does Carl Beam's *The Columbus Project* contribute to the debates about the remembered and celebrated history of the discovery of the Americas? The following answer proves most explanatory and inclusive. The collages that together form the exhibition made for the quincentenary show both the

great discovery and wonderful experience that Europeans had by finding this new land, while at the same time putting emphasis on the fact that there is another narrative at play here; the collective memory of Native Americans and First Nations who had inhabited the land long before the immigrants came, and have since suffered a great deal. The various works that Beam made for the project have allowed for a different point of view to the dialogue about the collective memory of the discovery of the continent because even though the work was made in the 1990s, it still has an impact today.

The writing process

As I mentioned in my introduction, the writing process had a rocky start. The limited scholarship available throughout the research did not prove to be as problematic as expected. It was an interesting experience to learn how best to make use of what was available and organize it in a way that is most inclusive and chronological. The internet proved helpful and valuable as a resource. The only problem that truly had an impact on the writing of this thesis and conducting of the research was the knowledge that books were unavailable at this time.

Further Research

Every time more information on Carl Beam was discovered another interesting fact that could be researched arose. For the scope of this thesis a lot of this information has been omitted because it would have either made it too large or too general. Carl Beam does not deserve that. His legacy needs to be remembered and researched more in various contexts. This thesis looked at the political affiliations of the work he made for *The Columbus Project*, but there is so much more that could be done. Carl Beam should be put on the international map. Therefore his work has to be paid more attention to. There are undoubtedly more hidden messages in his work that have yet to be properly researched. These messages will contribute to his legacy and conveying them to a larger audience might lift him beyond the confines of the Canadian art scene. A starting point for further research is his most important artwork, *The North American Iceberg* because that was purchased by the National Gallery as contemporary art instead of indigenous art. Step one would be to visit and see this collage in person and asking the museum directors why the first work made by a First Nation was purchased in 1985. A research question that came from this thesis and could form the base for another project is; what did the National Gallery of Canada find so important about *The North American Iceberg* that this is the first art made by a First Nation considered to be

contemporary art? More questions have come from this thesis, which added to the realization that it is not nearly done yet.

In addition, Carl Beam's wife Ann Beam, and daughter Anongonse Migwans Beam, still live on Manitoulin Island in Canada. Hopefully, an opportunity to interview them will present itself so they can help complete more scholarship about his work. In the spirit of Carl Beam himself "[i]f an artist has a legitimate premise, there is nothing which isn't within their field of enquiry."

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Cover photo:

Photo of the works included in *The Columbus Project*, *Canadian Art*, Fall 2006.

Source. Canadian Art. Web. 14 June, 2017.

Appendix

Image 1. Map of the location of Anasazi pottery works. Carl Beam and his family went to New Mexico to learn the technique.

Source: Manitou Cliff Dwellings. “Major Anasazi Regions and Sites.” Web. 21 May, 2017.

Image 2. *Re-Alignment 1984*, 1984. The text is a reference to the American presidential elections of 1984. Glazed earthenware. 3x38.5cm diameter.

Source. National Gallery of Canada. Web. 5 June, 2017.

Image 3. *The North American Iceberg*, 1985. Acrylic, Photo-serigraph and graphite on plexiglas. 213.6x374.1cm

Source. National Gallery of Canada. Web. 5 June, 2017.

Image 4. *Voyage*, 1988. Painted wood sculpture. 530x308x310cm installed.

Source. John K. Grande “Carl Beam: From Sitting Bull to Rauschenberg, and Back Again,” *Canadian Art*. Web. 5 June, 2017.

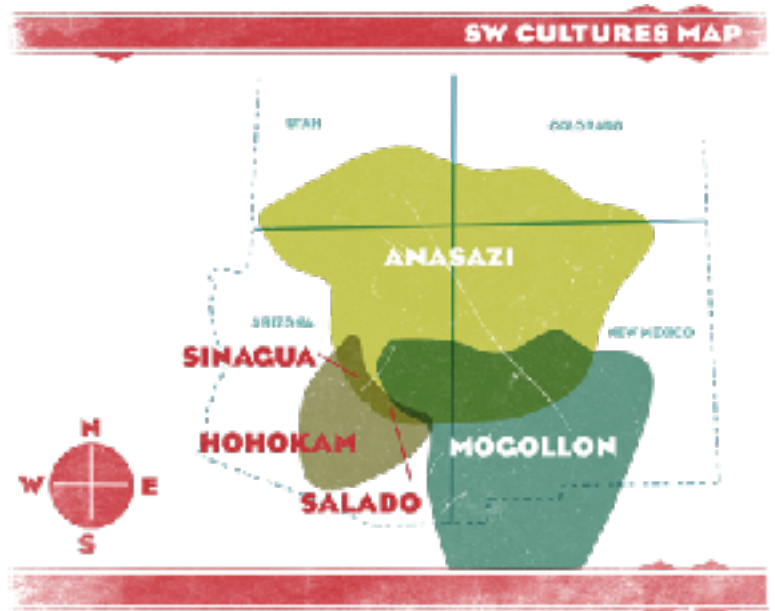


Image 5. *Burying the Ruler*, 1991. Photo emulsion and acrylic on Canvas.



160x214cm

Source. Art Bank

Canada. Web, 5 June

2017.



Image 6. *The Columbus Chronicles*,
1992. Photo-emulsion, acrylic, graphite
on canvas. 274.3x213.3cm.

Source. National Gallery of Canada.

Web. 5 June, 2017.



Image 7. Jasper Johns, *Flag*, 1954-1955. Encaustic, oil, and collage on fabric mounted on plywood, three panels. 107.3x153.8cm.

Source. Museum of Modern Art New York. Web. 8 June, 2017.



Image 8. Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*, 1955. Oil and pencil on pillow, quilt, and sheet on wood supports. 191.1x80x20.3cm

Source. Museum of Modern Art New York. Web. 8 June, 2017.



Image 9. Z, 1991. Photo emulsion on paper with colored crayon and colored ink. 26.1x18.4cm.

Source. National Gallery of Canada.

Web. 5 June, 2017.



Image 10. *The Problematical Theoretical*, 1991. Photo emulsion, graphite and ink on wove rag paper. 73.5x55cm.

Source. National Gallery of Canada. Web. 5 June, 2017.



Image 11. *The Problematical Theoretical No. 2*.
 1991. Photo emulsion, graphite and ink on wove rag
 paper. 73.5x54.5cm.
 Source. National Gallery of Canada. Web. 5 June,
 2017.



Image 12. *Only Poetry Remains*, 2002.
 Photosilkscreen, gouache, graphite, coloured
 pencil, and watercolour on wove paper.
 127.8x242.7cm.
 Source. National Gallery of Canada. Web. 5 June,
 2017.



Image 13. *Time Warp*, 1984. Acrylic on linen.
3.04x12.19cm.

Source. National Gallery of Canada. Web. 5 June, 2017.



Image 14. *Originator No. 2*, 1991. Photo emulsion
on paper with colored crayon and colored ink.
18.3x26.9cm.

Source. National Gallery of Canada. Web. 5 June, 2017.

Image 15. *New
World*. Photo
emulsion, steel
engraving.
31.5x47in.



Source. Coghlan Art Gallery. Web. 7 June, 2017.



Image 16. *Portrait of John Wayne, Probably*. Photo emulsion, steel engraving. 31.5x47in.
Source. Coghlan Art Gallery. Web. 8 June, 2017.

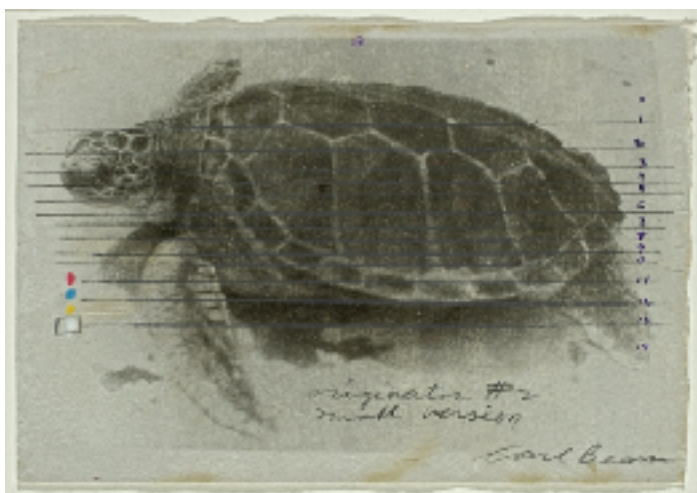


Image 17. *Lincoln and Ravens*. Photo emulsion, steel engraving. 31.5x47in.

Source. Coghlan Art Gallery. Web. 7 June, 2017.



Image 18. *The Unexplained*, 1989. Photo emulsion, steel engraving. 31.5x47in.

Source. Coghlan Art Gallery. Web. 8 June, 2017.



Image 19. *Sitting Bull and Whale*, 1990. Photo emulsion, steel engraving. 31.5x47in.

Source. Coghlan Art Gallery. Web. 8 June, 2017.



Image 20. *King and Kennedy*. Photo emulsion, steel engraving. 74.9x11.4cm.

Source. Artnet. Web. 8 June, 2017.



