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Public Commemoration

New Mexico's *Cuarto Centenario*: History in Visual Dialogue

ALISON FIELDS

This happened, this is happening, it's still happening.

—Nora Naranjo-Morse

Abstract: Out of the aftermath of the New Mexico Cuarto Centenario (the four hundredth anniversary of the Spanish explorer Don Juan de Oñate's 1598 settlement in present-day New Mexico) came a pledge to create a memorial for the conquistador. The memorial was envisioned as a tri-cultural endeavor, with Reynaldo "Sonny" Rivera, Betty Sabo, and Nora Naranjo-Morse collaborating. Because of his complex legacy, the three artists could not agree on how to represent Oñate. Rivera and Sabo ultimately crafted a series of bronze statues of Oñate and his entourage titled "La Jornada," while Naranjo-Morse created an earthwork titled "Numbe Whageh." These two approaches give physical form to a contested history, and present very different modes of remembering New Mexico's colonial past.

Key words: trauma studies, historical memory, public art, New Mexico history, Native American art

NEW MEXICO'S COLONIAL PAST laid the groundwork for generations of trauma. Through the passing on of cultural memory, descendants continue to carry the emotional weight of their history hundreds of years later. Marita Sturken states that cultural memory—the way a specific culture engages in col-

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The Cuarto Centenario memorial. (Photograph by Alison Fields)

lective remembrance—"is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning."¹ Often, communities respond to traumatic losses through the construction of sites of cultural memory. This embodiment of memory is an active process, directly tied to political and social institutions. The memorial, the most familiar of memory objects, therefore operates as a site of mediation. Battles over identity politics, over inclusion and exclusion, and over who is sanctioned to speak of specific memories complicate forms of remembrance. But ultimately, memorials are constructed as places of healing, where we can be absolved of the past, reach closure after trauma, and find comfort in restored group unity. While it is politically advantageous for memorials to promote unity and reconciliation, this focus can shut down dialogue and critical inquiry about the past.

In this article, I argue that the effects of historical trauma on individuals and their modes of remembering are ongoing, and cannot reach discursive or figural closure. How can we remember the past and still be cognizant of its effects on the present and future? I believe that this question can be addressed by identifying forms of remembrance that resist forced resolution. To do this, I will focus on the Cuarto Centenario memorial in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which honors Spanish conquistador Don Juan de Oñate.

1. Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the Aids Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3.

The memorial project, in its attempt to reinforce group unity, exposed centuries-old cultural divides and continuing struggles with past trauma. Because it failed to address these strong emotions at the onset of the project, the memorial is fragmented in form. Through a consideration of New Mexico's contested past, the political battle over representation, and a visual analysis of the memorial site, I examine the limits and possibilities of giving physical shape to past trauma.

Oñate's Ongoing Legacy

Out of the aftermath of the New Mexico Cuarto Centenario, the four hundredth anniversary of the Spanish explorer Don Juan de Oñate's 1598 settlement in New Mexico, came a pledge to create a memorial for the conquistador. Responses to Oñate's historical legacy have remained in constant dispute. He has been credited for the establishment of the first permanent European settlement in the continental United States, and for introducing horses, cattle, sheep, a variety of new crops, the first road, the mining industry, European law, Christianity, and Hispanic culture to the New World. Complicating these contributions was Oñate's engagement with New Mexico's Native people. In December of 1598, warriors from Acoma Pueblo killed twelve Spanish soldiers, including Juan de Zaldivar, Oñate's nephew and field marshal. In retaliation, the Spanish soldiers declared war, sending seventy soldiers up to the mesa, resulting in the death of one hundred Acoma men and the enslavement of sixty women and girls. Twenty-four surviving Acoma men were further punished, when Spanish soldiers ordered that the right foot of each man be cut off. The Spanish government tried Oñate as a war criminal and permanently banished him from New Mexico.

Generations later, some New Mexicans of Spanish descent feel that the history of Oñate's settlement has been misrepresented in the public sphere. Millie Santillanes, who was raised in Albuquerque's Old Town and took pride in her Basque heritage, claimed that representations of Hispanic people in the state of New Mexico were frequently biased and unfair. Over her career, she worked to address these concerns. As a local business owner, Santillanes became the first female president of the Hispano Chamber of Commerce and the Albuquerque Old Town Merchants Association, and was a founding member of the Hispanic Women's Council. Santillanes played a major role in the creation of the Fiesta de Albuquerque Founders Day, an annual celebration honoring the founding families of Albuquerque. From 1994 to 1997, Santillanes worked as Albuquerque's city clerk and took on the role of the Cuarto Centennial project director. Prior to her death in 2007, she was named Albuquerque's cultural services director.

As a founding member of the Hispanic Culture Preservation League, Santillanes joined forces with Conchita Lucero to petition New Mexico schools to include accurate portrayals of Hispanic leaders when teaching state history.

The organization worked to overturn the “Black Legend,” which marked early Spanish explorers as intolerant and cruel. The Black Legend can be traced to the 1552 writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas, a former Bishop of Chiapas, which roundly criticized Spanish treatment of Native populations in the New World. In his writings, which were later widely circulated through Europe, Las Casas depicted Indian people as peaceful and innocent and Spanish colonizers as greedy and self-interested. The Preservation League sought to challenge these long-embedded stereotypes and focus on the positive contributions of Spanish colonizers in New Mexico—a revision sometimes termed the “White Legend.” Lucero said, “We were trying to bring into light some of our Spanish history—and not the Black Legend history, but the fuller picture.”²

For the Cuarto Centenario celebration, Santillanes and Lucero proposed erecting a bust of Oñate in Albuquerque’s Old Town, re-centering the conquistador as a key historical figure in New Mexico. Honoring Oñate was a way to draw attention to the earliest European settlement in the New World, giving preference to the Southwest over historical narratives focused on Jamestown or Plymouth Plantation. Santillanes said, “It was not the pilgrims, it did not happen at Jamestown or at Plymouth Rock. The first permanent European settlement flew the Spanish flag, here in New Mexico, they were our forefathers, and we are proud of them.”³ However, public disagreement over Oñate’s legacy led to complications in creating a memorial in his honor.

Conroy Chino, who was raised at Acoma Pueblo, became an outspoken memorial opponent. At the time of the memorial’s proposal, Chino was a well-known public figure in New Mexico, having worked for many years as a television news anchor and investigative journalist for Albuquerque’s KOB-TV 4. He served as the host of Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian radio series *Living Voices*, where he discussed national Native issues. Chino also acted as the assistant producer and narrator of the 1992 PBS documentary, *Surviving Columbus*, which focused on early contact between the Pueblos and Europeans and earned the 1993 George Foster Peabody Award. Chino became New Mexico’s Secretary of Labor under Governor Bill Richardson from 2002 to 2006 before creating his own video production company.

At Acoma Pueblo, the historical events surrounding Oñate’s settlement had long fallen into the recesses of cultural memory. Chino had grown up not knowing the name Oñate. As the people of Acoma survived and adapted to the major forces of colonization, Chino said, “I think that one way to deal with that was not to talk about it. They say you resolve something . . . it has been planted. You don’t ever come back to that issue, because to come back to that issue is to revive and relive all the emotional pain that came.”⁴ As deliberations over the Cuarto Centenario celebration brought Oñate’s actions back to

2. Conchita Lucero, interview by the author, June 16, 2008.

3. Millie Santillanes, “Hispanic Settlers’ Struggle Proper Focus of Celebration,” *Albuquerque Journal*, January 24, 1998.

4. Conroy Chino, interview by the author, July 17, 2008.

the forefront, Chino recognized the impact of this public discussion at Acoma Pueblo. Hearing the story that had been “planted” long ago provided “a combination of surprise and shock and emotional release.”⁵ For Chino, it also provided some explanation of “why there was a huge gap in history, why the event was never passed on.”⁶ Although memory of this traumatic past had been long buried, efforts for resolution had never been completely successful. For instance, Chino had always wondered why there was such animosity with Hispanic people in the area and why so many in his generation suffered from low self-esteem and self-worth.⁷ Mental health scholars Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra DeBruyn have claimed that destructive behavior in Native communities is exacerbated by “a legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations,” a phenomenon they label “historical unresolved grief.”⁸ Additionally, in physical markers such as the Spanish mission church on Acoma’s mesa top, the legacies of early colonizers remained.

Chino was stunned to hear that the city was considering using public funds to honor Oñate with a memorial. He felt that if the planners had known more about Oñate’s violent history, they might have felt differently about financing the project. He said, “I was wondering if they had done research, if they fully checked out the facts about Oñate, who had read the books that I had read. I don’t know if they would have come away wanting to memorialize Oñate.”⁹ On December 19, 1997 Chino wrote a strongly worded letter to “One Percent for Art” Director Gordon Church, describing the insult that the memorial posed to Native people. He provocatively questioned, “Would the city for one second consider such a memorial for a historic figure like Hitler?”¹⁰ Chino used Hitler’s name to attract attention and provide a more contemporary comparison to which people could relate. His larger point, however, was “Why would you want to memorialize someone who has this history?” Looking back, Chino said that his letter brought memorial plans “to a screeching halt, which was kind of the intent. It really was an effort to hit the pause button a little bit so that we could discuss and debate the issue to find out if they truly wanted to move forward with this project.”¹¹ Chino’s letter galvanized opposition to the memorial project.

Forced Unity

The memorial proposal demonstrated that despite the hundreds of years that had passed, many Native and Hispanic New Mexicans still feel a strong

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra M. DeBruyn, “The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief,” *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research*, 8, no. 2 (1998): 60.

9. Conroy Chino, interview by the author, July 17, 2008.

10. Letter from Conroy Chino to Gordon Church, December 19, 1997.

11. Conroy Chino, interview by the author, July 17, 2008.

emotional investment in how the story of Oñate is told. As Alison Landsberg writes, deeply felt personal memories can develop from events through which the person did not live.¹² How could such a contested history be memorialized? The Albuquerque Arts Board formed the Cuarto Centenario Committee to answer this question, bringing together Native, Hispanic, and Anglo community members. Quickly, plans for a simple bust of Oñate were left behind and the memorializing effort became a multicultural endeavor. The committee determined that the memorial should “evoke the spirit of community and co-existence of distinct cultures which has made New Mexico unique.”¹³ Bruce Pearlman, chief operations manager for former Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chávez, suggested that the shift towards a multicultural memorial was a reflection of needs expressed by the community. He said, “One or more of the cultures felt underrepresented and they made a claim for more representation and I think the output was that a structure was put together that allowed everyone to have input into the monument and to make it more representative. So in a way, government worked.”¹⁴

This call for inclusiveness fit a pattern for public art already well established in the Southwest. In public discourse, New Mexico had become very reliant on a tri-cultural trope. Chris Wilson writes, “For most of the twentieth century, the state’s rhetoric of tri-cultural harmony among Indians, Hispanics, and Anglos formed a shared consensus on which to base public art.”¹⁵ This rhetoric stressed amicability and order, while maintaining a sense of separation and purity among New Mexico’s primary cultural groups. Further, the tri-cultural trope forced a sense of inclusion, warranted or not, onto productions of cultural memory. Therefore, the Cuarto Centenario memorial was envisioned as a tri-cultural endeavor, with Reynaldo “Sonny” Rivera, Betty Sabo, and Nora Naranjo-Morse collaborating. According to a project prospectus put forth on April 6, 1999, the three artists were tasked with creating an inclusive memorial that would represent Oñate, highlight the contributions of the early settlers, and honor the continuing presence of Native people in New Mexico.¹⁶

As the artists tried to reach a shared vision, the tri-cultural project quickly fractured. Rivera, who grew up in southern New Mexico immersed in his Hispanic culture, settled in Albuquerque to pursue his career as a sculptor. He specializes in realistic bronze sculptures of human and animal figures, highlighting moments of historic and cultural change. When brought into the

12. Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 2.

13. Addendum #1, Relevant Aspects of the Cuarto Centenario Planning Committee’s Vision related to the Memorial.

14. Bruce Pearlman, interview by the author, October 18, 2007.

15. Chris Wilson, “Monuments to a Selective History,” *Designer/Builder: A Journal of the Human Environment*, 3, no. 2 (March 1997): 31.

16. Prospectus, City of Albuquerque, Public Art Program/Capital Implementation Program for the Creation of a Sculptural Memorial Commemorating New Mexico’s Cuarto Centenario, April 6, 1999.

Cuarto Centenario project, he was no stranger to representing the conquistador, having won a competition to create a bronze equestrian sculpture of Oñate in northern New Mexico in 1992. Rivera experienced public protests against Oñate personally when his twelve-foot statue, part of the Oñate Monument Center in Rio Arriba County, was vandalized. A press-described “Indian commando group” sneaked into the monument center, severed the statue’s right foot, and left an anonymous note indicating that the act was on “behalf of our brothers and sisters at Acoma.”¹⁷ Suspecting he might receive a ransom note for the severed foot, Rivera acted quickly, building a replacement and reattaching it within eight days. After this setback, Rivera might have been reluctant to revisit this subject matter, but when asked by Santillanes to represent Oñate in the Old Town memorial, Rivera agreed. “I was aware that it wasn’t popular with everybody,” he said. “But I figured, you cannot sugar-coat history. We had to come from something, from somewhere, as all the Spanish people, may it be from Mexico, may it be from Spain. We all came from somewhere.”¹⁸ Next, the Arts Board invited Sabo to join the project as the Anglo participant. Sabo was raised in Kansas City, Missouri, but after majoring in art at the University of New Mexico, became deeply interested in depicting Southwestern landscapes. An accomplished painter, Sabo turned to life-sized bronze sculptures only in her sixties. Her figural works have a notable presence in the New Mexico, appearing at Albuquerque Museum, the University of New Mexico, and the Basilica in Santa Fe, among other locations.

Finally, Church asked Naranjo-Morse, a potter and poet from Santa Clara Pueblo, to become involved. Naranjo-Morse is the daughter of distinguished Santa Clara potter Rose Naranjo, who taught Nora to work with clay. In her artwork, however, Naranjo-Morse moves between media, including ceramics, sculpture, poetry, mixed media, photography, installation, and film, and her work often contains themes that speak to issues of commercialization, consumerism, cultural continuity, and self-determination. Naranjo-Morse’s work has been exhibited throughout the country and is in collections at the Heard Museum, the Museum of Northern Arizona, the Albuquerque Museum, and the Smithsonian Institution. Church told Naranjo-Morse that they were looking for a Native American artist to work in a collaborative effort to memorialize the shift that was caused by entrance of Oñate into New Mexico and the impact this had on Native people and places. He warned her that this project was becoming a challenge, but she agreed to try it. Looking back, Naranjo-Morse said, “I came in as, I don’t want to say an afterthought, I don’t want to say a token, I don’t want to say a third wheel . . . I was asked to participate after several things that I had not been aware of were already in place. The con-

17. James Brooke, “Conquistador Statue Stirs Hispanic Pride and Indian Rage,” *New York Times*, February 9, 1998.

18. Sonny Rivera, interview by the author, November 2, 2007.

troversty had already begun.”¹⁹ There had already been an insistence from the Native community that the city re-think memorialization of Oñate, and Naranjo-Morse’s presence was meant to address these concerns. Naranjo-Morse was under the impression that she was brought in to be a collaborator on the vision, but when she was introduced to Sabo and Rivera, a design for the memorial had already been proposed.

Although the memorial was envisioned as a tri-cultural effort, a number of shortcomings with this rhetoric emerged. First, and most strikingly, the tri-cultural trope did not take into account the hybridity that existed within and between cultures living together for hundreds of years. How could one artist be representative of the entirety of a diverse culture? At times, Naranjo-Morse had the sense that she was being used as a token Indian to fit the project’s tri-cultural goals. She felt placed in the uneasy position of Native spokesperson, and she was conscious of all the parties she needed to appease. While involvement in the political debate was trying, it did make her focus and think, “What am I really trying to say here? I wasn’t going to be a token. I wanted to be sure that this piece meant something, while being careful of bureaucracy and politics.”²⁰ Because the memorial design was mediated and pushed forward through city government, political motivations were constantly questioned and contested.

Bringing these three artists together was widely viewed as a political move for correctness and inclusiveness. A project initially meant to mark in time the arrival of the Spanish in New Mexico had taken on a broader scope than intended. Pearlman, however, stressed that the development of the memorial was not an overly political process, any more than any other output of public operations. “I hate to say it, but in a lot of respects, the politics of this stuff comes at the end, when the public gets involved,” he said. “When things are controversial, people get involved. It makes it political in the sense that people get involved, but not political in the sense because it has nothing to do with partisan politics, with representative politics.”²¹ When news of the memorial was made public, community members became very vocal about how Oñate should or should not be represented. In the midst of mounting criticism, memorial supporters remained steadfast. When initially pitching the project to public institutions, Santillanes had pointed to a “spirit of accommodation and reconciliation that prevails today”²² among the three cultures. In later public hearings, however, she stated, “Acoma has no place in our memorial.”²³ Such comments created deep chasms, dividing the community.

19. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, November 1, 2007.

20. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, March 8, 2005.

21. Bruce Pearlman, interview by the author, October 18, 2007.

22. Letter to Maria Teresa Marquez, Government Information Department, September 16, 1997.

23. Quoted in James Brooke, “Conquistador Statue Stirs Hispanic Pride and Indian Rage,” *New York Times*, February 9, 1998.

The Politics of Representation

The artists gamely set about to reach a unified vision, though with some trepidation. Rivera and Sabo had already developed a design for the memorial, which they drew upon in their first brainstorming session. Sitting down together, it took only two and a half hours for the three artists to develop a concept to present to the Arts Board, an expansive bronze and stone piece dominated by a larger-than-life statue of Oñate. Rivera envisioned a bronze statue of Oñate facing north, fully armored and carrying a sword. He wished to stress that “Oñate is no weakling guy,” and that the memorial should be about ruggedness and existence in a land of the fittest.²⁴ Sabo agreed with the need to forefront Oñate, “Even though he did beastly things, he brought settlers in. It took a brute to do that.”²⁵ Naranjo-Morse focused her attention on crafting a Native response to Oñate. Her initial idea included a succession of tiny moccasins leading away from the statue, with one set missing the right shoe, a reference to the amputations at Acoma. The team’s concept was met with heavy criticism from all sides, including Native Americans. Naranjo-Morse said, “From my perception, it probably was not collaborative enough. It wasn’t creating a tri-cultural togetherness and happiness and intercultural understanding and dialogue. It did not do that. There was already a true separation, not only in style, there was already a concern about what this was saying.”²⁶ Naranjo-Morse thought that the addition of the moccasins made a subtle statement, but it was ultimately deemed too provocative. The three artists were asked to rethink the collaborative effort.

The Arts Board moved into action, leaning heavily on the Cuarto Centenario Committee for input. Charged with drafting suggestions for a revised memorial design, the committee held a series of public hearings to receive feedback from the community. The public debate proved an emotional roller coaster for the three artists. Sabo said that the artists sat there as “people got up and ranted and raved.” She added, “I would go home and cry because they made you feel like you were doing something awful but it was so important that it be done because it is such an important part of what New Mexico is.”²⁷ Naranjo-Morse, who had initially called the collaboration “a true testament to working things out,”²⁸ now seriously considered withdrawing from the project altogether. “Then I thought of the people who suffered. I got scared, I had hurt feelings, but I still have my feet. I kept thinking that someone beyond is asking me to do this. That’s the way I believe,” she said.²⁹ Neverthe-

24. Quoted in Ollie Reed, Jr., “Artists Blend Cultures, Concepts, Feelings for Oñate Monument,” *The Albuquerque Tribune*, January 26, 1998.

25. Ibid.

26. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, November 1, 2007.

27. Betty Sabo, interview by the author, September 20, 2007.

28. Ollie Reed, Jr., “Artists Blend Cultures, Concepts, Feelings for Oñate Monument,” *The Albuquerque Tribune*, January 26, 1998.

29. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, March 8, 2005.

less, as the issues appeared on television and in the newspapers, Naranjo-Morse continued to question herself.

The public outpouring, where many community members insisted on representing Oñate as a hero, left Naranjo-Morse feeling very confused and tentative. For instance, New Mexico resident John Lucero said, "If your family is of Spanish descent, this [the threat to remove Oñate from the memorial] is a personal attack on you, your family, and your heritage." Old Town Artist Danny Blea commented, "I think the Indians should have some forgiveness. I don't think it was like Adolf Hitler or anything." Voices spoke just as loudly in opposition to representing Oñate. Lloyd Tortalita, the then-Governor of Acoma, said, "We are totally against this. Oñate was sentenced (by the Spanish government) to perpetual banishment from New Mexico. That banishment should be adhered to whether in person or stance."³⁰ Others agreed that a statue of Oñate brought an actual embodiment of the conquistador back to New Mexico. "By honoring this man, you give him back his eyes, his spirit, his heartbeat. It is a spirit not worthy of being memorialized," Lloyd Joe (Navajo) said.³¹

After nearly forty hours of meetings, the group rallied around a new memorial design that would bypass representing Oñate all together, instead focusing on early settlement and cultural exchange. Sabo was "thunderstruck" at the change in agenda.³² However, this new design idea was swiftly undercut on March 1, 1999 when the City Council, with no public discussion, unanimously voted on a resolution sponsored by Councilor Adele Baca Hundley, stating that the memorial must contain an explicit image of Oñate.³³ While Hundley's resolution finally sparked action, it was passed before the council could fully consider the findings of the Cuarto Centenario Committee or the proposal to leave Oñate out of the memorial. The resolution, passing quickly and without public hearings, left members of the committee disheartened. Member Ron Shutiva, an Albuquerque resident from Acoma Pueblo, said, "This community effort was trashed by the council. This just shows how politics works in the city of Albuquerque."³⁴ Mayor Jim Baca, who had taken office in 1998, found the City Council's quick decision troubling. He responded with a veto of the resolution, pronouncing the issue "too divisive" not to give the public a voice.

Meanwhile, the artists were also struggling to work together. It was becoming more apparent that the representational style of Rivera and Sabo

30. Quoted in "Stone Faced City Council Rejects Pleas," *Albuquerque Journal*, March 16, 1999.

31. Quoted in "Council Overrides Baca Veto of Oñate Statue," *Albuquerque Journal*, April 6, 1999.

32. Quoted in "Oñate Statue Artists Told to Regroup," *Albuquerque Journal*, April 12, 1999.

33. Anthony DellaFlora and Scott Smallwood, "City Council Quickly OKs Oñate Statue," *Albuquerque Journal*, March 2, 1999.

34. Quoted in Anthony DellaFlora and Scott Smallwood, "City Council Quickly OKs Oñate Statue," *Albuquerque Journal*, March 2, 1999.

clashed with the conceptual style of Naranjo-Morse. She could not agree with the other artists on a vision for the memorial. The city sent them to mediation; even then, they could not agree. Next, the city suggested that Naranjo-Morse work with the landscape. She says, "At first, I was offended, I thought they were asking me to plant flowers at Oñate's feet."³⁵ Then she started thinking about the land. Ultimately, approaching the piece from the land base made the most sense to her as a Native person. Naranjo-Morse explains, it is the "simplicity and strength of the land that molded our world sensibility and that has kept us alive as people."³⁶ It is this land base that, over the years, informed her worldview and enforced the legacy of her ancestors. From this, she created "Numbe Whageh," or "Our Center Place," to honor Native people on their own terms. As Naranjo-Morse moved ahead with her earthwork, Sabo and Rivera remained committed to rendering Oñate and his entourage in bronze.

The public had its first opportunity to see sketches and a clay model of the revised memorial design at a December 13, 1999 City Council meeting. Rivera and Sabo proposed a ten-by-sixty foot section titled "La Jornada" or "The Journey," that would feature more than a dozen life-size bronze figures representing Oñate, his fellow settlers, and representative livestock. Naranjo-Morse's environmental landscape "Numbe Whageh" featured a spiral descending to a small reflecting pool, surrounded by boulders and indigenous plants. The site of the memorial was planned to be at the northwest corner of Tiguex Park, just east of Old Town Plaza. A stretch of green between the Albuquerque Museum and the New Mexico Museum of Natural History, the park is named in honor of Tiwa-speaking peoples of the region who inhabited the Rio Grande Corridor. While the City Council was scheduled to vote on the memorial design, councilors sent the issue to its Land Use, Planning, and Zoning Committee in January, where it was approved and sent back to the full council the following month. On February 23, 2000, approximately one hundred people, both supporters and dissenters of honoring Oñate, attended the City Council meeting. The meeting was marked by hours of emotional testimony, as two dozen members of the public were given the opportunity to speak. Debate centered on the current design proposal, which included the separate bronze figures and conceptual landscape. This plan, community members worried, might further divide the cultures, rather than bringing them together.³⁷ After the public meeting, the Council again decided to postpone a vote on the memorial plan.

On March 6, 2000, the Albuquerque City Council passed a 7–2 vote in favor of building the memorial. Further, the council approved a resolution by

35. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, March 8, 2005.

36. Numbe Whageh, videocassette, directed by Nora Naranjo-Morse, photographed and edited by Dax Thomas (City of Albuquerque Public Arts Program, 2005).

37. Anthony DellaFlora, "Council Delays Memorial Action," *Albuquerque Journal*, February 24, 2000.

Councilor Hundley to move the memorial's location to the sculpture garden of the Albuquerque Museum, on more neutral ground than Tiguex Park.³⁸ The idea of placing an Oñate statue in a park honoring Native Americans had been a sticking point for opponents of the project, to the extent that legal action was threatened if the memorial moved forward. The decision to move the memorial to the sculpture garden, however, was made without the museum's input. The director of the Albuquerque Museum at the time, Jim Moore, was against having the Cuarto Centenario memorial in his front yard, fearing the divisive project would become a signature for the museum.³⁹ However, the shift in sites was viewed favorably overall. Even after agreeing on the museum site, negotiations of how to allocate the land continued. According to Naranjo-Morse, the original plan was to place "Numbe Whageh" in the corner of the museum's sculpture garden, at the busy intersection of Mountain and Nineteenth Streets. Santillanes stepped in, insisting that La Jornada should be placed at the intersection instead.

Naranjo-Morse has a distinct memory of the call from Church informing her of this change. She was standing in her kitchen on the phone, holding a sheet of paper containing the design of both pieces, when a breeze came through the room and blew the plans out of her hands. In this moment, Naranjo-Morse said, "I felt like I let go, that act of the wind coming through and moving it on, I felt was very symbolic. Up until that point, everything was a struggle. Every word was measured, every action, the way I looked at people going into these council meetings, these committee meetings, I had to be careful."⁴⁰ Once informed of the switch, Naranjo-Morse felt that everyone was waiting for her to withdraw, to say that the project just wasn't working. Instead, she felt herself truly letting go and recognizing that she could not force things to be different. This "epiphany" in the kitchen led her to focus on the statement that she wanted to make with her memorial and abandon the collaborative effort.

When the memorial was approved and logistics were coming together, questions remained about the project's price tag. A bitter battle ensued concerning the amount of tax money being spent on this public arts piece. Issues of ownership and identifying who could make decisions regarding the statue were fiercely negotiated. When Santillanes first put forth the idea for a memorial, she imagined a simple bust of Oñate, costing less \$100,000. After public deliberations and the decision for a more elaborate, inclusive memorial, the price tag exceeded \$600,000. Voters approved \$400,000 in a bond issue, and the remainder of money was to be contributed by "One Percent for Art" money. In an effort to return the memorial to its original scale, Councilor Greg Payne drafted a bill that would limit city spending on the memorial to \$180,000, and the city would then use the bond money to develop youth pro-

38. Anthony DellaFlora, "Council OKs Colonizers Memorial" *Albuquerque Journal*, March 7, 2000.

39. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, November 1, 2007.

40. Ibid.

grams and improve city parks. Payne explained, “I’m not a big fan of spending public money on public art. What I’m trying to do here is resolve, once and for all, an endless emotional sore for the city.”⁴¹ Santillanes objected, saying this proposal ignored the will of voters who approved the bond issue. This debate was also racially charged. Albuquerque resident Michael Sanchez challenged Payne, “How dare you, an Anglo, cut back funding for a statue for Hispanics.”⁴² Resentment towards protesters from Acoma Pueblo was also shown. Armando Cordova of Albuquerque said, “These Indians want their sovereignty, but they want to tell us what to do. Unless you live in Albuquerque and pay taxes, don’t come here and tell us what to do.”⁴³ Although still concerned about the memorial’s hefty price tag, the Council turned down Payne’s substitute bill. While uncertainties remained about the memorial, the March 6 vote gave supporters much to look forward to. While Santillanes cried tears of joy, Conchita Lucero said, “I think our kids will finally learn about their ancestors.”⁴⁴ Memorial opponents, on the other hand, were disappointed and gathered at a candlelight vigil to say prayers.

La Jornada

With the memorial approved, the artists were able to begin work on their respective contributions. For Rivera, bringing “La Jornada” to life fulfilled the vision he had for the memorial since its inception. Rivera’s vision for La Jornada was grounded in his knowledge of the land, cultivated through a life lived on the Rio Grande portion of New Mexico. In naming the memorial, he was inspired by the famous trail where the colonizer entered New Mexico. Widely known as the Camino Real, the trail was also called the Chihuahua trail, the Oñate trail, or La Jornada.

Rivera’s familiarity with southeastern New Mexico’s hills, mountains, plains, and rivers provided an imaginative starting point. Rivera thought of the sand patterns of the Rio Grande, the way the dirt hardened in parts, and the irregular slopes of the hills, and he imagined what the challenge had been to move the *carretas*, or wagons, across this land. He envisioned the oxen pulling, people pushing, horses tugging on the yoke, and a child poking the oxen with a stick, prodding them onward as the wheels sunk into the dirt. Inspired by Rodin’s representational impressionistic work, Rivera infused his work with movement—in the people and animals, and even the carts—showing them tilting and going up hill, never perfectly straight.

41. Quoted in Oliver Uyttebrouck, “Statue, Downtown On Council Plate,” *Albuquerque Journal*, March 6, 2000.

42. Quoted in Leanne Potts, “Oñate Gets His Day,” *Albuquerque Tribune*, March 7, 2000.

43. Quoted in James Brooke, “Conquistador Statue Stirs Hispanic Pride and Indian Rage,” *New York Times*, February 9, 1998.

44. Quoted in Anthony DellaFlora, “Council OKs Colonizers Memorial” *Albuquerque Journal*, March 7, 2000.



La Jornada: "Onate" and his guide. (Photograph by Alison Fields)



Pushing the carreta. (Photograph by Alison Fields)

Rivera said, “So I wanted to show that, the main focal point, the struggle for them to come here. They didn’t have . . . interstate highways. For them to come up there, they had to be explorers.”⁴⁵ Oñate especially, Rivera said, had “no business” making this journey, as his family had already found wealth in Mexico. Yet, he could not resist the opportunity to explore. Rivera tries to capture the pride and honor in such explorations for his audience, “If I ever want anybody to look at my work, whether Hispanic or not, I want them to feel proud. That’s why I felt that these guys had that big heart and knowledge and backbone to explore this new land. That’s what I want people to know. If they see my sculptures, I want them to feel proud. If I am representing a horse, let it be a proud horse.”⁴⁶ Rivera suggested that if people feel this pride looking at his work, his goals have been accomplished.

Another focus for Rivera was to show what the settlers contributed in the New World, including Christianity, cattle, horses, silversmithing, irrigation, plant life, vegetables, sheep, wool—all of which are still important today. Rivera recognized the diseases and unfavorable things the settlers brought, but he pointed out that these “tough old men, tough ladies, tough kids” endured without the benefits of hospitals, and relied on their knowledge of medicinal plants.⁴⁷ Although Rivera acknowledged claims of Oñate’s atrocities against Native people, he claimed simply, “There’s no proof.”⁴⁸ Instead, he pointed to how the introduction of Spanish horses expanded Native hunting ranges, to the construction of impressive mission churches at Acoma and elsewhere, and to the mining technology that allowed the crafting of more elaborate turquoise jewelry.

In representing the struggle of the Spanish journey and the contributions of the settlers, historical accuracy remained an important concern, but interpretation was unavoidably just as vital to the piece. Like any work of art, Sabo said, “you have to consider the audience and what it is you are trying to say, and I wanted to say that it was a huge hardship for the people that did do it,” she said. “I wanted them to look glad that they did it. They aren’t suffering in the hardships. It shows how difficult it was for them, but they aren’t in any kind of pain over it. Obviously it was a nightmare coming in.” Sabo did a lot of reading to learn about Oñate’s journey, especially the kinds of animals that would have accompanied the settler train. One of her favorite pieces of the entourage is a bronze pig that would have traveled in step with the group’s leaders, serving as a speedometer of sorts. As for the division of labor, Rivera’s figures included Oñate, his Indian guide, the oxen and horses, and the cart. Sabo sculpted the women, children, the priest, and the smaller animals. Sabo said, “We knew where we were. He did the masculine stuff and I did the feminine. His are rougher than mine, but the things he did were rougher.”⁴⁹ Once

45. Sonny Rivera, interview by the author, November 2, 2007.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. Betty Sabo, interview by the author, September 20, 2007.



Entourage of women and children. (Photograph by Alison Fields)

Sabo began working, the process took nine months of full-time work. She said, “Sonny works a lot faster. I have to have every nipple right. This kind of thing, he just throws together, but they are marvelous. They have a lot of life and strength to them, they’re beautiful.”⁵⁰

Rivera and Sabo were both charged with imagining the faces of historical figures, with no record of their physical description. Rivera approached the task through instinct, sculpting Oñate in the likeness of a surprising model. Rivera explained:

It’s how I feel about people. And I had this real strong . . . David Martínez had that feature. He was sort of homeless, and he had been in Vietnam, and he was 100% disabled, he goes off his rocker once in a while, he likes dope, he *loves* dope, and that’s just downplayed. The guy was in Vietnam, he was a hero there, but he couldn’t get rated. The guy is a leader, the guy has got guts and more. He’s a trained fighter and there’s been people talking about how good they are and how tough they are and this guy will just say, what are you looking at? He loves to compete, and he’s that knowledgeable, it’s just that he goes off his rocker and basically does just dope. Well, he’s my Oñate. [It’s] not about his actions, but because he has that strength, and his looks. And he’s been a problem to all his family and to all the city personnel and I still love him.⁵¹

50. Ibid.

51. Sonny Rivera, interview by the author, November 2, 2007.

Rivera's feeling about Martínez was so powerful that he did not care about any negative feedback his choice might bring. In somewhat of a role reversal, Rivera also used close friends Chris Baca, head of Youth Development, Inc., and Mel Montoya, a two-star general, as models for supporting roles in the entourage. With a grin, Rivera adds, "On the other horse is *el bonito* [the pretty one]. That's me. I put myself on that horse."

Sabo also chose to model her settlers after members of the present-day community. Millie Santillanes is embodied as the woman reaching down to help the child. It was widely speculated that Mayor Chávez was the model for the priest figure. When asked, Sabo wavered slightly and said, "I think, kind of. I didn't make it look like him. Since he was the mayor during this, and got it through, I thought it was nice to do. I think a lot of people resented it. I didn't do it because he was a hero, but he was in a way because he did cause it to happen." The inclusion of well-known figures in the memorial drew some fire from the public. In an anonymous column in *New Mexico Viewpoint*, a former member of the Cuarto Centenario committee specifically objected to the inclusion of Santillanes, writing, "Are there not other Hispanic Nuevomexicanos whose faces could have served as models? Why this fawning tribute to insiders? Such are New Mexico politics."⁵² However, this move made sense to Pearlman, suggesting that the artists had to use models, and that by using descendants from the early settlers, "one assumes they carry with them what those people had and looked like."⁵³

The completed "La Jornada" memorial, a ten by sixty foot expanse, contains sixteen bronze human figures and their trail of animals facing north toward San Gabriel. Oñate is leading the group, flanked by two conquistadors and an Indian guide. The human figures also include a kneeling priest, a woman reaching for her child, another group of women and children, two men on horseback, two men pushing a *carreta*, and an ox driver. The animals include horses, rams, ewes, oxen, and a pig. While Rivera and Sabo both contributed to "La Jornada," Sabo was clear that the final memorial was the result of three individual efforts. Again, Sabo indicated the separation between herself and Rivera from Naranjo-Morse, commenting, "There was nothing she [Naranjo-Morse] could do. So all there is [is] that plot of dirt that she's got hanging out there. I think something more will come there eventually."⁵⁴ Rivera responded more knowingly to Naranjo-Morse's project: "Sacred grounds. That's what she has there is a sacred place. Sacred grounds for the Native people. And rightly so. They were here first."⁵⁵

52. "Oñate Rides Again," November 8, 2005, nmviewpoint.typepad.com/new_mexico_viewpoint/2005/11/onte_rides_agai_1.html

53. Bruce Pearlman, interview by the author, October 18, 2007.

54. Betty Sabo, interview by the author, September 20, 2007.

55. Sonny Rivera, interview by the author, November 2, 2007.



Installing "Numbe Whageh." (Photograph by Alison Fields)

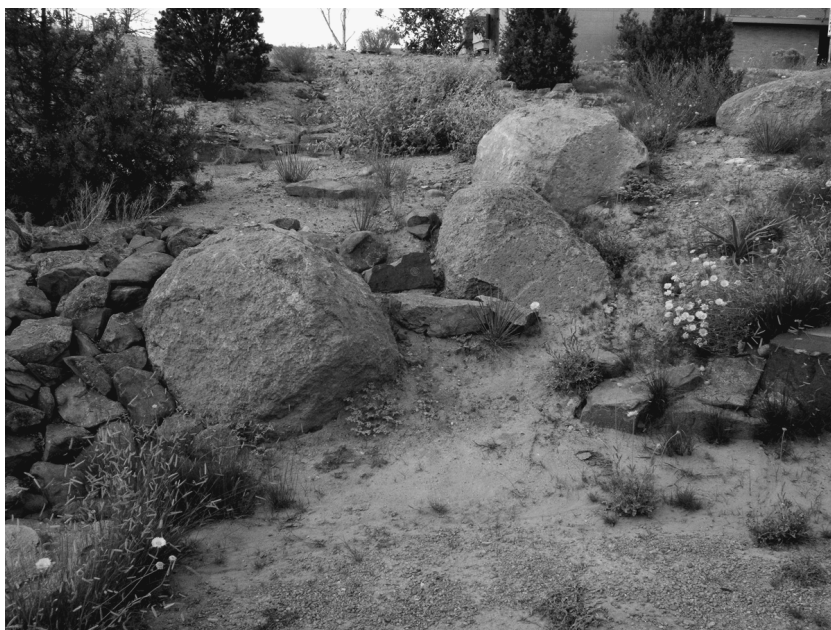
The Center Place

*"Look at me," she says. "Look at my motion." Her hands move circularly across her stomach, her chest. "It is yourself, the spirit of who you are. That's it. That's what this form is."*⁵⁶

Etched directly into the ground of the Albuquerque Museum's sculpture garden, Naranjo-Morse has created what she calls Albuquerque's first earthwork. The installation collapses history, memory, time, and space, and arises from the particular sensibilities of a Pueblo woman. Her matriarchal perspective informs "Numbe Whageh," giving it a particularly feminine approach. Experiencing "Our Center Place" requires actually moving through its space, descending on a spiral path. This path forces the viewers to become directly involved with the piece, and become aware of their journey through the space. The form of the spiral was chosen to reflect a Native perspective on time. "Native people see time in a different way," Naranjo-Morse said. "This represents that simultaneous existence and that relationship to what is the present, or what was the past—our ancestral past—and what is in the moment and beyond."⁵⁷ In this way, the individual becomes connected to a communal past.

56. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, March 8, 2005.

57. Quoted in Anthony DellaFlora, "Coming Full Circle," *Albuquerque Journal*, December 19, 1999.



Tumbling Rocks. (Photograph by Alison Fields)

Reaching the middle of the spiral, the viewer comes to “the womb of us,”⁵⁸ the center of “not only the earth, but who we are as people.”⁵⁹ In this space of calm a faint stream of water trickles. The water element is sustained by a strategically placed solar panel, the one nonorganic element of the space. Naranjo-Morse said, “Interestingly enough, the solar panel is juxtaposed to the pole by La Jornada so that nobody can come and saw off Oñate’s foot. While one is speaking to sustainability, the other is speaking to a fear factor.”⁶⁰ This panel is a nod to the technology of using the environment and letting it give back to itself. Indigenous plants mark this downward journey, from shade trees, to apache bloom, chamisa, yucca, and cactus. Naranjo-Morse creates with the view that objects—rocks, trees, clouds—join to compose living landscapes, and can function as art. In giving preference to organic material, she ensures that the work will change over time. Trees will grow, throwing light and shadows in new places. Grasses will provide a softer terrain than the dry earth. As the years go on, “Our Center Place” will become an even more distinct landscape. Over the last few years, Native women artists have added to the space by carving into rocks installed in the spiral. The ever-changing na-

58. Numbe Whageh, videocassette, directed by Nora Naranjo-Morse, photographed and edited by Dax Thomas (City of Albuquerque Public Arts Program, 2005).

59. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, March 8, 2005.

60. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, November 1, 2007.



View of Albuquerque's former National Atomic Museum from Acoma Bluff. (Photograph by Alison Fields)

ture of the installation parallels Naranjo-Morse's conception that history itself cannot be frozen or closed off.

Built-up earth walls, emphasizing the downward spiral, hold large rocks, donated by Santa Clara Pueblo. The volcanic based rocks, Naranjo-Morse says, have been "tumbling for a long time"⁶¹ in nature, and had settled into the bottom of First Pond in Santa Clara Canyon. After the Cerro Grande fire in 2000, the pond was drained, and the three rocks were donated. They are placed in the installation as if they were tumbling still.

Climbing out of the center, a point six and a half feet below sidewalk level, a path continues to a high point, eight and a half feet above sidewalk level. This point, referred to as "Acoma Bluff," contains a rock donated by Acoma Pueblo and is situated facing the direction of the pueblo. For Naranjo-Morse, because people at Acoma were so against the total project, this particular rock is her "biggest coup."⁶² Despite her pride over Acoma's contribution, the political battle is visually absent in the piece.

Instead, Naranjo-Morse's organic perspective, from *numbe*, from the cen-

61. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, March 8, 2005.

62. Ibid.



Between two trees. (Photograph by Alison Fields)

ter place of the earth, speaks to the cultural worldview of pueblo people pre-contact. However, her choice of form and materials provides a deliberate visual contrast. When exiting the spiral, the viewer will have a direct sightline of the Oñate statue, framed between two trees.

Moving from an inward, contemplative, and consciously feminine center place, the towering, upright bronze statue of Oñate will be even more striking. The image of a conquistador conquering the land and people, Naranjo-Morse said, is “so, so perfectly symbolized by Oñate standing there, in all his glory, in his regalia, with all the people behind him following him with their cattle and their carts.”⁶³ While Naranjo-Morse acknowledged the Spanish contributions represented in the sculpture, she finds herself drawn to the figure on Oñate’s right-hand side, “to a smaller Native person dressed in European clothing, meaning that that colonization, that assimilation had begun. That’s the story that’s being told.”⁶⁴ Naranjo-Morse’s use of organic materials also adds to the contrast with “La Jornada.” She explains that the Tewa word for “nails” has become a derogatory term for Hispanics.⁶⁵ While the Spanish settlers brought the culture of metal and industry, the center place is almost com-

63. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, November 1, 2007.

64. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, March 8, 2005.

65. *Ibid.*

pletely organic. "This is alive," Naranjo-Morse says. "That was exactly how I wanted to respond. We are still here and a live culture no matter how we are colonized."⁶⁶ "Our Center Place" is a symbol of endurance and survival. It will not stand unaltered by time, but unlike other earthworks, it is a message of growth rather than natural decay.⁶⁷ It speaks to permanence, a sense of being here and continuing to be here.

External Constraints

Although "Numbe Whageh" is reflective of a pre-contact world and celebrates Native continuance and survival, it was built around particular external possibilities and constraints. First, the earthwork was the result of a highly mediated political process, which limited Naranjo-Morse's range of expression. Further, in developing "Numbe Whageh," Naranjo-Morse was doubly displaced from the mainstream art world and city government—as both a pueblo person and a woman. Ultimately, Naranjo-Morse created a piece that was not overtly political but was "simplistically complex"⁶⁸ and singularly powerful. Informed by her matriarchal society, Naranjo-Morse's womanhood gave her a unique tribal perspective from which to speak. Although she was grateful that a Native woman was chosen to speak to these issues, her gender created a "whole different protocol"⁶⁹ necessary for her to accomplish what she needed to get done. She was conscious of gender in her interactions with tribal councils, which she says have become more male oriented of late. Naranjo-Morse says she dressed differently, in more traditional garb, when she approached tribal councils about removing rocks for her installation, "to show I was respectful."⁷⁰ This protocol carried over into city council meetings, where councilors were predominantly male. She used the etiquette that she had followed "in the same way I followed it in a more tribal situation."

Finally, Naranjo-Morse dealt with the possibilities and constraints imposed by the contemporary Native art world. Steven Leuthold, in *Indigenous Aesthetics*, identifies specific characteristics of indigenous expression:

Natives often believe there are social rules for art that they should follow and guard, including rules of content, contest form, and personnel; that art should be community-oriented; that art is an expression of the sacred; and that art is useful, beautiful, and functional. The artist is not above or separate from society; there is little social pressure toward innovation for its own sake; and art is

66. Ibid.

67. For more on earthworks, please see Gary Shapiro, *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art after Babel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

68. Nancy Marie Mithlo, "On an Ordinary Day," In *Reservation X*, Ed. Gerald McMaster (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 81.

69. Ibid.

70. Nora Naranjo-Morse, telephone interview by the author, March 23, 2005.

understood in the context of religious communal, and personal narratives, and through its utilitarian functions.⁷¹

Naranjo-Morse's "Numbe Whageh" reflects many of these features. Like other contemporary Native artists, Naranjo-Morse has created a piece that is conceptual in form. This art form opens up possibilities in materials, message, and display. "Numbe Whageh" is very much a communal piece. It follows Leuthold's assertion that "the collective function of art originates in religion." By religion, he does not refer to doctrine but to "a profound sense of one's place in the universe."⁷²

"Our Center Place" is also marked by a preference of process over product. Again, visual form echoes a vision of history that is always ongoing, never complete. This emphasis on process is perhaps most evident in the careful documentation of the installation process captured in Naranjo-Morse's eight-minute film, also called "Our Center Place." Naranjo-Morse is drawn to the medium of film because of its accessibility and its potential to reach a larger audience. Nancy Marie Mithlo, in the catalogue for *Clay People*, notes, "Clay is still her anchor, but video opens more doors."⁷³ A figure sold to a private home, or even an installation at a museum, reaches a limited audience, but film can easily travel. Naranjo-Morse explains, "The clay process prepared me for the medium of video as well as the other mediums I'm exploring. My hands moving in a circle across a wall of clay is the same movement as my hands slowly moving a video editing knob."⁷⁴ The circular motion, the flow of creativity, is what provides inspiration.

Her experimentation with new forms, particularly installation, spoke to her frustrations with the current art market. She finds that operating on the fringes allows liberation. By producing pieces too large for or thematically distanced from typical Native art venues, she is able to work beyond the confines of the market. Naranjo-Morse's concerns with the art market stem from her sense that "we are commodified, we are colonized. Our art is culturally identifiable, and we have been compartmentalized into neat packages. We have bought into it; this is how we see our self."⁷⁵ Real artwork, she states, makes both the artist and audience smarter and more aware. However, art in its true form requires that artists think for themselves. They must move beyond the dictates of the art market and consider what art could say. Naranjo-Morse offers "Numbe Whageh" as an alternative to the commodified art market, which too often has little to say. Specifically, she sees this project as an important examination of Albuquerque's relationship to the Native community. The par-

71. Steven Leuthold, *Indigenous Aesthetics: Native Art, Media, and Identity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 49.

72. Steven Leuthold, *Indigenous Aesthetics*, 89.

73. Nancy Marie Mithlo, "Inside Out: How Art Defines Us." In *Clay People: Pueblo Indian Figurative Traditions*, ed. Jonathan Batkin (Santa Fe: Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, 1999), 18.

74. Ibid.

75. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, March 8, 2005.

ticular local contexts of this piece seem to place it outside Western art theory's attempt at universalization. However, while Naranjo-Morse's work comes from a specific political situation, and a specific history, she also describes her piece as universal. It is about looking at the legacy of history, looking at the land, and asking us all, "now what do you do with it?"

Developing Dialogue

Teasing out the complexities of the entangled narrative shaping "Our Center Place" is a challenge for the viewer. Naranjo-Morse recognizes the conceptual and multilayered implications of her work. However, "Our Center Place" gives tangible form to narratives existing deep in New Mexico's history—issues of race, politics, culture, and discrimination. It provides a site of cultural memory. By embodying these narratives, Naranjo-Morse is opening up a dialogue, noting, "We in New Mexico really need to deal with each other." She asks, "What do we do with this information, with this land given to us? How do we start this education? How do we remember?"⁷⁶ In part, this education comes simply from experiencing the piece, but it will also come through formal measures.

"Our Center Place" occupies a liminal space on the grounds of the Albuquerque Museum, but it is considered a public arts piece. Sabo explained, "I think they [the museum staff] were real upset about having it pushed on this museum, but I think before it was over we were all happy."⁷⁷ Yet the distance between the Albuquerque Museum and the memorial remains palpable. Museum staffers stressed that the installation is "not ours," that it was a city project, completely separate from the museum. Chino joked that maybe the museum "had experienced the same trauma as the Pueblos—they just want to forget about it."⁷⁸ Nonetheless, the museum will include "La Jornada" and "Numbe Whageh" in docent-led tours of the sculpture garden. If "Our Center Place" is not the Albuquerque Museum's, to whom does it belong? Naranjo-Morse developed her installation specifically for the Native community. Particularly, she says, "I want urban Indians, those that are disenfranchised, and have little access to their culture, to use this as a place to meditate, as a place to get married, as a place to hold a naming ceremony."⁷⁹ In the Pueblo way of blessing specific pockets of land, a medicine man has visited "Our Center Place" and has given the landscape his blessing. Of the multiple voices captured in her film, one states, "This monument is created within our hearts, within our minds, within the culture."⁸⁰ It is a place that is both

76. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, November 1, 2007.

77. Betty Sabo, interview by the author, September 20, 2007.

78. Conroy Chino, interview by the author, July 17, 2008.

79. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, March 8, 2005.

80. Numbe Whageh, videocassette, directed by Nora Naranjo-Morse, photographed and edited by Dax Thomas (City of Albuquerque Public Arts Program, 2005).

constructed and real, a corner of public land that becomes a place for imagination, for contemplation, and for connection.

While directly targeting a Native audience, Naranjo-Morse recognizes that “Mary Jo from Kansas” will also be part of the audience and will need a more explicit explanation. To what extent can non-Natives experience “Our Center Place”? Certainly, the promise of connectedness, an attachment to place, is appealing to a Euro-American audience, who, as George Horse Capture noted, “left their center in Europe.” But Naranjo-Morse asks that viewers go further, using “Our Center Place” not only as a place of contemplation, but as a vehicle to teach and expand awareness of a complex history. Through the circulation of her accompanying film, and by giving guest lectures about her piece, Naranjo-Morse has tried to share the broader story of the memorial project and its historical implications. However, reflecting on her audience’s interaction with “Numbe Whageh” today, she said, “I think no one has touched it.” Although some visitors have tried to approach the memorial from an “institutional mindset,” real dialogue has yet to begin. Naranjo-Morse added, “So, at this point, the best I hope for is that Numbe Whageh thrive, and that Numbe Whageh becomes a place that maybe not all people come to, but that some people come to and find a sense of peace and centeredness and remember those things that I was trying to articulate.”⁸¹ Naranjo-Morse’s desire for continued social and historical engagement with “Numbe Whageh” is reflected in her choice of the creative medium of an earthwork, which will experience growth and human-made additions (such as the rock carvings added by women artists) over time.

The forms of “La Jornada” and “Numbe Whageh” offer very different possibilities for engagement with the past and continued dialogue in the future. In *Contesting Oñate: Sculpting the Shape of Memory*, Kathy Freise argues that “the figurative half stays allied to the past, whereas the landscape half is linked to the past and, more productively, to the future.”⁸² The design of “Numbe Whageh” demands that the viewer take a participatory role in experiencing the memorial. It cannot be easily viewed from the street, and people must get out of their cars to see it. “La Jornada,” on the other hand, is easily visible to passers by. Visitors to the Old Town area frequently spot the statues as they pass by, stop to take photographs among the entourage, and go on their way. Sabo revealed, “I go down and visit with it now and then and see what we did. It attracts a lot of attention. People standing in the entourage, taking pictures. It’s just people going by. It’s extremely prominently displayed. You see a lot of people driving by, and then getting out to look. It’s attracting a lot of good vibes.”⁸³ Naranjo-Morse agreed that the “La Jornada” has become “a great photo op,” but feels that this level of engagement is too safe and comfortable and shuts off critical inquiry. She said:

81. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, November 1, 2007.

82. Kathy Freise, “Contesting Oñate: Sculpting the Shape of Memory,” in *Expressing New Mexico: Nuevomexicano Creativity, Ritual, and Memory*, Ed. Phillip Gonzales (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 235.

83. Betty Sabo, interview by the author, September 20, 2007.

It gives you reassurance that history is being told, but all along my question is, what kind of history is being told? What are we saying about our society if we can't even look at the past and what happened and how we deal with it in terms of ourselves, present and future? None of that, none of that, is articulated.⁸⁴

Sabo and Pearlman suggested that the scale of the memorial made it approachable, and engaging with the figures creates an educational experience in itself. The Cuarto Centenario memorial brings to mind a display of Syrian art that Pearlman visited as a child in Los Angeles. Although it was made of hammered plate gold, he said, "You knew it was a gazelle." In such representational work, the power lies in recognition. Pearlman continues, "It [La Jornada] is people frozen in a moment in time, and to be able to see them and approach them is revealing of our shared humanity. The important thing for me in that kind of presentation is the recognition of what we share with the people, how much like us they are, not how different they are."⁸⁵ Yet the scale of the "La Jornada" is larger than life. Rivera and Sabo agreed that all adult figures should stand at least six and a half feet tall, to give the sculpture series a feeling of substance. The larger-than-life figures, however, further the separation between the audience and the historical figures, effectively distancing people from the past.

Resisting Forced Resolution

What about the feelings of rage and hurt that infused the project's early days? Sabo said, "I think that they sure cooled down. I think that they were expecting something much more violent, is the only word. Whereas this, we made it a peaceful thing. I think it has calmed down a lot of really bad feeling about it, and about Oñate himself, too. It has kind of softened it a little bit, the feelings." Pearlman, too, suggested that the finished memorial had a calming effect. He said, "I think that by fighting it out on the monument, so to speak, reduces and reduced the need to fight it out [in other ways]. A lot of things get hashed out in those kind of processes and if it's done right, people will go away feeling included, represented."⁸⁶ Conroy Chino said, "Certainly, I've moved past it. I don't run around raising issues about Oñate. I think it's more about taking it to the next level of consciousness, racial tolerance and intolerance and prejudice, coming to accept not only our commonalities but what is different."⁸⁷ Chino continues to advocate for Native people as partner in the Native American Tribal Voices Group, an organization that addresses the needs of tribal communities in the Southwest.

In many cases of commemoration, it is commonly felt that once memori-

84. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, November 1, 2007.

85. Bruce Pearlman, interview by the author, October 18, 2007.

86. Ibid.

87. Conroy Chino, interview by the author, July 17, 2008.

alized, a historical event achieves closure. Pearlman described the Cuarto Centenario memorial as a “cathartic endeavor” that left people feeling “included, represented.”⁸⁸ Both Chino and Naranjo-Morse rejected the idea that the completion of the memorial eased feelings toward Oñate. Naranjo-Morse said, “I think what happened was that it was such a long, arduous journey that we undertook with Cuarto Centenario, that when it was over, people just wanted to say it’s over, end of story, let’s move on. And basically, that’s what happened.”⁸⁹ This desire to move on is evident in the loose ends that remain at the memorial site. Descriptive plates, meant to introduce the project to visitors, took years to erect. She added, “That says something to me. If the city can’t even continue with their stewardship, if you can’t even find somebody to pick up the trash, on either one of those, if there is no intellectual discourse on any level, I would say that is not true.”⁹⁰ Naranjo-Morse pointed to the absence of programming at the site, pointing out that the memorial provides a perfect example of New Mexican history. The lack of educational programming appears to be tied to the Albuquerque Museum’s lack of ownership of the city project and overall disconnect from the memorial. Nevertheless, Naranjo-Morse said, “I think it’s the part of the museum or the city to ensure that that there be a continuous dialogue, just like there is my stewardship to the land in Numbe Whageh, there should be stewardship to children who are growing up, Native, non-Native, that this is happening, this happened, this is happening, it’s still happening.”⁹¹

Like the spiral of her earthwork, Naranjo-Morse envisions history as a part of a continuum, where the past is necessarily connected to the present and future. Therefore, the purpose of Numbe Whageh can be understood as an opening of memory, a starting point for critical thinking and discussion about the ongoing legacies of the past. In contrast, Rivera and Sabo’s bronze figures create a snapshot of a historic moment—one that freezes Oñate on his grueling journey. Although emphasis is placed on Oñate’s contributions, *La Jornada* necessarily omits his complex future encounters in the region. This encourages viewers to see Oñate as part of a past that is completed and closed off. Numbe Whageh and *La Jornada*, therefore, demonstrate how differing purposes of memorialization reflect differing views about remembering history.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that for many New Mexicans, the completion of the Cuarto Centenario led to relief that the public battle over Oñate had ended, but the ongoing legacy of colonization cannot reach discursive or figurative closure. The divergent views of history that rose to the surface during the Cuarto Centenario deliberations did not fundamentally change upon the memorial’s completion. Debates about how history should be told continue

88. Bruce Pearlman, interview by the author, October 18, 2007.

89. Nora Naranjo-Morse, interview by the author, November 1, 2007.

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*

in the Southwest, with recent public concern that school textbooks would be revised “to get rid of Daniel Boone in favor of Cesar Chavez,” among other changes.⁹² Despite a lack of visible programming at the memorial site, Arturo Sandoval, who took on the role of Cuarto Centennial Project Director in 1997, said that one of the most positive aspects of the installed memorial was interest by local teachers who wanted use the memorial as a teaching tool. He said, “We tend not to look back or worry about our past,” but that the memorial became a tool for examining state history.⁹³ Finally, the spatial layout of Cuarto Centenario memorial serves as a very public reminder that tri-cultural inclusiveness cannot provide resolution to historical trauma. The difficulty in engaging in dialogues about the past, present, and future is directly reflected in the memorial’s disconnected form. Rivera points out, “It sits in separate places. It’s not all lovey dovey.”

The Cuarto Centenario memorial project illustrates the challenges of group remembrance. When a community is fractured through a traumatic event, efforts are made to focus on unity and healing. Creating a clear, ordered narrative of the trauma, with a set beginning and ending, helps people move on. However, many people are invested in the way memories are told, and experiences of trauma cannot be assigned limits. For forms of remembering to be cognizant of the present and future, more is required than a relationship with the past. Kyo Maclear suggests that it is not enough simply to witness and commemorate. Rather, remembrance must be the starting point for inquiry and action. Maclear writes that it is particularly necessary to address the underlying structures that cause collective trauma. Experience of extreme group loss, she claims, is necessarily tied to complex practices of racism, colonialism, and Manifest Destiny. To account for the continuing effects of trauma, a new strategy for remembrance is needed. Maclear writes, “These memories are still happening. They cannot be assigned dates or limits, which are not their own. They test the alienating slumber of tradition, the exclusions of national communities, and call us to remember at life’s boundaries—to rethink the boundaries.”⁹⁴ The new strategy might be considered what Gerald Vizenor describes as “aesthetics of non-synthesis.”⁹⁵ An aesthetics of non-synthesis suggests that imposed efforts to return to a “whole” after trauma do not reflect the needs of individual healing. Instead, strategies are needed to open up difficult discourses and give credence to survivors.

Through the use of organic materials and form, Naranjo-Morse resists placing limits on the experience of trauma. Her earthwork not only honors the past, but works against forced unity and resolution to allow for continuing di-

92. Peter Doocy, *Textbook Battle Lines Drawn Over History*, March 9, 2010, <http://liveshots.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/03/09/textbook-battle-lines-divide-over-history/#ixzz0xIj47S3x>

93. Katy June-Friesen, October 20–26, 2005, http://alibi.com/index.php?story=13065&scn=feature&submit_user_comment=y

94. Kyo Maclear, *Beclouded Visions: Hiroshima-Nagasaki and the Art of Witness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 133.

95. Gerald Vizenor, *Lecture*, Dec. 7, 2005.

alogue in the future. With “Numbe Whageh,” Naranjo-Morse employs a new strategy for remembering. She proves Sturken’s statement that memorials can serve “not as a singular statement but as a site of mediation, a site of conflicting voices and opposing agendas.”⁹⁶ In *Tangled Memories*, Sturken outlines two kinds of remembrance, a first that re-inscribes U.S. imperialism and masculinity, and a second that is more textured and complex that allows Americans to speak of pain and loss.⁹⁷ The latter exists in a space between opposing interpretations. However, in this mediated space, complex historical narratives are made legitimate and new voices are heard in the national narrative. Naranjo-Morse’s “Our Center Place” operates as such a site, where the endurance of Pueblo people is celebrated and remembered alongside a past marked by colonization.

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96. Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 83.

97. Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 84.