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# Subversion through Inversion: Kent Monkman's "The Triumph of Mischief"

Monique Belitz

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**SUBVERSION THROUGH INVERSION:  
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**SUBVERSION THROUGH INVERSION: KENT MONKMAN'S  
*THE TRIUMPH OF MISCHIEF***

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**ABSTRACT**

Monkman's acrylic painting *The Triumph of Mischief* is the central subject of this investigation which includes its relationship to other paintings and objects in the installation *The Triumph of Mischief*. By applying Mieke Bal's narratology theory, the principles of carnivals as proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, the four dichotomies underlying Western movies, Monkman's appropriation of older art work, his use of various binary opposites and his inclusion of iconographic details from various art history epochs are explained.

Investigating the painting from a postcolonial and postmodern theoretical angle demonstrates that several iconic images from Western art history are decolonized by mocking and undermining their intentions. Through the insertion of Native Americans and the leadership of a third gender indigenous person, Monkman reappropriates the land for Native cultures and reintroduces the acceptance of a gender spectrum. By comparison and contrast I show that Monkman ridicules iconographic conventions established since the Renaissance regarding gender roles. In a similar fashion he derides visual traditions pertaining to Lewis Henry Morgan's theory of cultural evolution and other epistemologies based on ethnocentric ideologies.



Particular targets are the academic fields of anthropology and art history, including specific artists such as George Catlin and Albert Bierstadt, museums and other institutions. My examination supports a postmodern reading of *The Triumph of Mischief* and establish that Monkman critiques both overtly and covertly several universalist meta-narratives such as Western civilization, the Myth of the Empty West, the Myth of the Vanishing Race, stereotypes regarding Native Americans, Western movies and the Catholic Church.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **CHAPTER 1**

Postcolonial Resistance to Western Epistemology.....	1
--	---

### **CHAPTER 2**

The Myth of the West: Its Manifestations and Implications.....	13
--	----

### **CHAPTER 3**

Encounter with “The Triumph of Mischief”.....	27
---	----

### **CHAPTER 4**

Carnival as Overarching Theme.....	38
------------------------------------	----

### **CHAPTER 5**

Gender Roles, Stereotypes, Minorities and The Catholic Church.....	52
--	----

### **CHAPTER 6**

Postmodern and Postcolonial Strategies.....	65
---	----

### **CHAPTER 7**

Conclusion: Power Games.....	75
------------------------------	----

FIGURES.....	94
--------------	----

REFERENCES.....	129
-----------------	-----

## LIST OF FIGURES

Fig.1. <i>Kent Monkman and Miss Chief</i> . 12 April 2012. <a href="http://kentmonkman.com/biography.php">http://kentmonkman.com/biography.php</a> >.	
Fig. 2. <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. ....	80
Fig. 3. Cher and Sonny Bono. 26 April 2012. < <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxoWto09Oyg">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxoWto09Oyg</a> >.	
Fig. 4. <i>Boudoir de Berdache</i> . Kent Monkman, 2010. <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> Installation. Art Gallery of Hamilton and Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art. Traveling exhibition from 2007-2010. ....	81
Fig. 5. <i>Miss Chief</i> . Mannequin in <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> Installation. Art Gallery of Hamilton and Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art. Traveling exhibition from 2007-2010	
Fig. 6. <i>Cristal Teepee</i> in <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> Installation. Art Gallery of Hamilton and Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art. Traveling exhibition from 2007-2010	
Fig. 7. <i>In a Stiff Current</i> . Frederic S. Remington, 1892, oil on canvas. Sid Richardson Collection of Western Art, Fort Worth, Texas. ....	82
Fig. 8. <i>Trappers at Fault: Looking for the Trail</i> . Arthur F. Tait, circa 1852-1860, oil on canvas. Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado.	
Fig. 9. <i>The Rape of Daniel Boone Junior</i> . Kent Monkman, 2002, acrylic on canvas. Collection of Gisèle Gordon. ....	83
Fig. 10. <i>Artist and Model</i> . Kent Monkman, 2003, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the artist.	
Fig.11. <i>Portrait of the Artist as Hunter</i> . Kent Monkman, 2002, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. ....	84
Fig. 12. <i>Cindy Silverscreen</i> . From: <i>Miss Chief: The Emergence of a Legend</i> . Kent Monkman, 2005, chromogenic print on metallic paper.	
Fig. 13. <i>Vaudeville Star</i> . From: <i>Miss Chief: The Emergence of a Legend</i> . Kent Monkman, 2005, chromogenic print on metallic paper.	
Fig. 14. <i>Film Director</i> . From: <i>Miss Chief: The Emergence of a Legend</i> . Kent Monkman, 2005, chromogenic print on metallic paper.	
Fig. 15. <i>The Trapper's Bride</i> . From: <i>Miss Chief: The Emergence of a Legend</i> . Kent Monkman, 2005, chromogenic print on metallic paper. ....	85
Fig. 16. <i>Hunter</i> . From: <i>Miss Chief: The Emergence of a Legend</i> . Kent Monkman, 2005, chromogenic print on metallic paper.	
Fig. 17. <i>The Trapper's Bride</i> . Alfred Jacob Miller, 1837, watercolor on paper. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland. ....	86
Fig. 18. <i>Louis Vuitton Quiver</i> . Kent Monkman, leather, printed fabric and arrows. Collection of the artist.	
Fig. 19. <i>Yosemite Valley</i> . Albert Bierstadt, 1868, oil on canvas. Oakland Art Museum, Oakland, California. ....	87
Fig. 20. <i>The Lonely Cross</i> . Thomas Cole, 1845, oil on canvas. Musee d'Orsay, Paris, France.	
Fig. 21. <i>Autumn in the Catskills</i> . Thomas Cole, 1827, oil on wood panel. Arnot Art Museum, Elmira, New York. ....	88
Fig. 22. <i>Mount Hood</i> . Albert Bierstadt, 1863, oil on canvas. Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon.	
Fig. 23. <i>Looking up the Yosemite Valley</i> . Albert Bierstadt, 1865-67, oil on canvas. The Haggin Museum, Stockton, California. ....	89

Fig. 24. <i>Not the End of the Trail</i> . Kent Monkman, 2004, acrylic on canvas. Private Collection.	
Fig. 25. <i>The End of the Trail</i> . James Earle Fraser, 1915, bronze. National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. ....	90
Fig. 26. <i>Miss Chief Approaching Picasso</i> . Detail of <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.	
Fig. 27. <i>Circle of Dancers with White Bison Calf</i> . Detail of <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. ....	91
Fig. 28. <i>Two Frontiersmen and Pigeon's Egg Head</i> . Detail of <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.	
Fig. 29. <i>Duchamp's Fountain</i> . Detail of <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. ....	92
Fig. 30. <i>Medicine Mask Dance</i> . Paul Kane, oil on canvas. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.	
Fig. 31. <i>Centaur and Indian Molesting Gold Seeker</i> . Detail of <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. ....	93
Fig. 32. <i>Pan, Minotaur and Buffalo Dancer</i> . Detail of <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.	
Fig. 33. <i>Charbonneau, Lewis and Clark and Tlingit Dancers</i> . Detail of <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. ....	94
Fig. 34. <i>Molestation of Priest and Gold Seeker</i> . Detail of <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.	
Fig. 35. <i>Pegasus and Fighting Indians</i> . Detail of <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. ....	95
Fig. 36. <i>The Ship of Fools</i> . Hieronymus Bosch, 1490-1500, oil on wood. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.	
Fig. 37. <i>The Haywain Triptych</i> . Hieronymus Bosch, 1490-95, oil on panel. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain. ....	96
Fig. 38. <i>The Entry of Christ into Brussels</i> . James Ensor, 1888, oil on canvas. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California.	
Fig. 39. <i>Drinking Minotaur &amp; Sculptor with Two Models</i> . Vollard Suite. Pablo Picasso, 1933, drypoint, etching. Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York. ....	97
Fig. 40. <i>Madonna of Chancellor Rolin</i> . Jan van Eyck, 1435, oil on panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.	
Fig. 41. <i>Madonna and Child in Glory</i> . Titian, 1520-1525, oil on panel. Pinacoteca Vaticana, Rome, Italy. ....	98
Fig. 42. <i>Detail of Trappers of Men</i> . Kent Monkman, 2006, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.	
Fig. 43. <i>Last Judgment</i> . Michelangelo, 1536 and 1541, fresco. Sistine Chapel, Rome, Italy. ....	99
Fig. 44. <i>St. Sebastian</i> . Sandro Botticelli, 1484, tempera on panel. Gemäldegalerie Berlin, Germany. ....	100
Fig. 45. <i>Garden of Earthly Delights</i> with detail. Hieronymus Bosch, 1490-1510, oil on wood panel. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain. ....	101
Fig. 46. <i>Heaven and Earth</i> . Kent Monkman, 2001, acrylic on canvas. Collection of Alfredo Ferran Calle.	
Fig. 47. <i>Ceci n'est pas une pipe</i> . Kent Monkman, 2001, acrylic on canvas. Private collection. ....	102

Fig. 48. <i>Desmoiselles D'Avignon</i> . Pablo Picasso, 1907, oil on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York.	
Fig. 49. <i>Dying Slave</i> . Michelangelo, 1513, marble. The Louvre, Paris, France. ....	103
Fig. 50. Detail of <i>Not the End of the Trail</i> . Kent Monkman, 2004, acrylic on canvas. Private collection.	
Fig. 51. <i>Pioneer Woman</i> . Leo Friedlander, 1935, bronze. Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas. ....	104
Fig. 52. <i>Pioneer Woman Statue</i> . Bronze. Pioneer Square, Worland, Wyoming.	
Fig. 53. <i>Gargantua</i> . Honoré Daumier, 1831, lithograph. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, California. ....	105
Fig. 54. <i>Dance to the Berdache</i> . George Catlin, 1832-39. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.	
Fig. 55. <i>Perseus and Andromeda</i> . Titian, 1554-56, oil on canvas. Wallace Collection, National Gallery, London. ....	106
Fig. 56. <i>Impending Storm</i> . Kent Monkman, 2004, acrylic on canvas. Private Collection.	
Fig. 57. Detail of <i>Impending Storm</i> . Kent Monkman, 2004, acrylic on canvas. Private Collection. ....	107
Fig. 58. <i>Frog Clan Potlatch Hat</i> . Tlingit. Early 19 <sup>th</sup> century. Alaska State Museum, Juneau, Alaska.	
Fig. 59. <i>Miss Chief Inside Circle of Dancers</i> . Detail of <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> . Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada. ....	108
Fig. 60. <i>No-ho-mun-ya, One Who Gives No Attention</i> . George Catlin, 1844, oil on canvas. Smithsonian American Art Museum.	
Fig. 61. <i>Wi-jun-jon, Pigeon's Egg Head Going to and Returning from Washington</i> . George Catlin, 1837-39, oil on canvas. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D. C. ....	109
Fig. 62. <i>Rebellion</i> . Kent Monkman, 2003, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank.	
Fig. 63. <i>The Big Basket Seller</i> . Kent Monkman, 2002, acrylic on canvas. Collection of James Kudelka & Jim Wies. ....	110
Fig. 64. <i>The Oxbow</i> . Thomas Cole, 1836, oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.	
Fig. 65. <i>Intervention of the Sabine Women</i> . Jacques Louis David, 1799, oil on canvas. Musée de Louvre, Paris, France. ....	111
Fig. 66. <i>Three Lattice Cradleboards</i> . Kiowa, around 1900, cloth, deerskin, glass beads, metal, wood. Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, Bristol, Rhode Island.	
Fig. 67. <i>Painted Ceremonial Robe</i> . Innu, middle of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century. Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado. ....	112
Fig. 68-70. <i>Souvenirs</i> based on Fraser's <i>The End of the Trail</i> . 26 April 2012. < <a href="http://www.google.com/search?q=Fraser%27s+The+end+of+the+trail&amp;hl=en&amp;client=firefox-a&amp;hs=vcT&amp;rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&amp;prmd=imvns&amp;source=lnms&amp;tbm=isch&amp;ei=YoWZT4PWoeioiQLFtszIDw&amp;sa=X&amp;oi=mode_link&amp;ct=mode&amp;cd=2&amp;ved=0CAsQ_AUoAQ&amp;biw=1600&amp;bih=771&amp;sei=Z4WZT8jVH4jbiALr6_H1Dw">http://www.google.com/search?q=Fraser%27s+The+end+of+the+trail&amp;hl=en&amp;client=firefox-a&amp;hs=vcT&amp;rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&amp;prmd=imvns&amp;source=lnms&amp;tbm=isch&amp;ei=YoWZT4PWoeioiQLFtszIDw&amp;sa=X&amp;oi=mode_link&amp;ct=mode&amp;cd=2&amp;ved=0CAsQ_AUoAQ&amp;biw=1600&amp;bih=771&amp;sei=Z4WZT8jVH4jbiALr6_H1Dw</a> >. ....	113
Fig. 71. <i>Athenian Amphora</i> . 5 <sup>th</sup> c. BC. Staatliche Antikensammlung, Munich.	
Fig. 72. Catlin's <i>Indian Gallery</i> . 1883. Smithsonian Institution Archive, Washington, D.C. ....	114
Fig. 73. Fig. 73. Interior of <i>the Boudoir de Berdache</i> . <i>The Triumph of Mischief</i> Installation. Art	

Gallery of Hamilton and Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art. Traveling exhibition from 2007-2010.

Fig. 74. *Nova Reperta: Vespucci Awakens a Sleeping America*. Jan van der Straet, 1600, Antwerp, Belgium. ....115

## Chapter 1

### Postcolonial Resistance to Western Epistemology

“I have determined to devote whatever talents and proficiency I possess to the painting of a series of pictures illustrative of the European Male. The subject is one in which I have felt a deep interest since childhood, having become intimately familiar in my native land with the hundreds of trappers, voyageurs, priests and farmers who represent the noblest races of Europe” (*The Triumph of Mischief* installation 14).

Kent Monkman’s (fig. 1) quote appeared as part of the wall text accompanying his 2007 installation *The Triumph of Mischief* at the Montréal Biennale. It is an adapted and subverted version of the introduction to Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America by Paul Kane, a prominent nineteenth-century Canadian landscape and Indian painter, who wrote the following: “...I determined to devote whatever talent and proficiency I possessed to the painting of a series of pictures illustrative of the North American Indians and scenery. The subject was one in which I felt a deep interest in my boyhood. I had been accustomed to see hundreds of Indians about my native village, then Little York, muddy and dirty, just struggling into existence, now the City of Toronto” (*The Triumph of Mischief* installation 9).

Monkman’s subtle altering of Kane’s quote is a case in point in regards to his whole oeuvre. In his installations, videos, paintings and photography, as well as in his illustrations and award-winning films (Monkman), Monkman applies postcolonial and postmodern strategies to challenge and undermine existing paradigms and stereotypes regarding Native Americans.

Monkman, of Cree and English/Irish descent, was born in Manitoba in 1965 and belongs to the Cree Fisher River Band of Northern Manitoba. He was raised in Winnipeg and became an extraordinarily successful multi-disciplinary artist with numerous national

and international solo and group shows after he completed his education at Sheridan College of Applied Arts in Brampton, Ontario, in 1989 (Galerie). He is currently working in Toronto and is represented by galleries in London, Berlin, Toronto and Calgary. His work can be found in major collections, which include the National Gallery of Canada, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum London, the Mackenzie Art Gallery, the Glenbow Museum and the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (Monkman).

Monkman's heritage of being half Native and of half European descent and his minority status as a gay man positions him in an unique situation from where he can rightfully question Western views of Native Americans by using the achievements of either culture to drive home his point. In his art he challenges a wide array of traditional values and beliefs, including the pervasive and tenacious conviction of the imminent and unavoidable demise of Native cultures, the belief that there are only two genders and any deviation thereof is unnatural or worse, and that Native Americans are only able to produce crafts and not art. Furthermore, in addition to refuting common Western history narratives, such as the myth of the empty West, Monkman especially takes offence regarding the concept of Lewis Henry Morgan's evolutionary stages of cultural development, which categorized many non-European cultures as savage and primitive. Seen as aiding and abetting in the imperial scheme, Monkman also attacks the Catholic Church and the discipline of anthropology, as their precepts and practices had a lasting influence on Native worldviews and realities.

Monkman's installation *The Triumph of Mischief* comprises works belonging to all aforementioned art genres and is built around the theme of recreating George Catlin's



*Indian Gallery* (fig. 72), although with scathing and subversive alterations. Catlin figures high on Monkman's list of renowned people of European descent whose ostensibly honorable intentions were based, however, on self-serving principles (West 21). This led to disastrous and enduring consequences for Native American cultures. Catlin's numerous writings, paintings, installations and actions are at the very center of Monkman's visual attacks in *The Triumph of Mischief*.

Regarding himself a scientist, ethnographer, explorer and author, the American nineteenth-century painter Catlin appointed himself the visual recorder and historian of various Native American cultures which he saw, as was common to his time, as rapidly declining and doomed to extinction. Catlin accompanied Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Clark on several trips to Indian Territory in 1830 and also visited the Omaha, Otoe and Pawnee nations with Major John Dougherty. Between 1830 and 1837 Catlin visited, lived with and painted over fifty tribes during multiple journeys and amassed a large collection of Native artifacts on the way.

After his return to the East Coast Catlin combined his oil paintings and sketches with his artifact collection into his *Indian Gallery* and started giving lectures regarding his journeys, experiences with and knowledge about Native American cultures (Ketchum 13-20). Catlin also shipped his collection, as well as various assemblies of Ojibwe and Iowa Indians (Mulvey 70), to Europe and toured various countries. His ultimate goal, however, was to persuade the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C. to purchase his *Indian Gallery*, which was ultimately accomplished in 1879, seven years after his death. To this day Catlin's paintings and writings are represented in art historical compilations as the work of a respected ethnographer who has been a "most pragmatic and

conscientious chronicler of Indian life” (Ketchum 17).

Monkman’s favorite protagonist is Miss Chief (fig. 1) who regularly serves as Monkman’s alter ego in his paintings, photographs, videos and films. She is the focal point in Monkman’s painting *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 2), which I will discuss at length in this paper. Her full name is Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, PostIndian Diva Warrior. She is responsible for upsetting the binary gender system of European cultures by choosing clothing elements of both male and female gender in a mix of Native and contemporary fashion. Miss Chief, whose features are those of Monkman himself, is based on the alleged part-Cherokee actress Cher (fig. 3), who appeared in a sequined Plains warrior outfit in the 1970s to perform her popular song “Half-breed.”

Monkman not only re-imagines the format of Catlin’s *Indian Gallery* in the way that his acrylic paintings replace Catlin’s and Miss Chief’s belongings are Indian artifacts, he also adds a second tipi, the *Boudoir de Berdache* (fig. 4), to the original one. He installs one Indian mannequin representing himself as Miss Chief in her drag queen outfit (fig. 5) instead of Catlin’s numerous dummies and employs videos to replace the performances of Catlin’s live Indian participants (McIntosh 32). Catlin’s performing Indians were forerunners of what later became part of the standard repertoire of the famous Buffalo Bill shows which toured the East Coast and Europe during the latter part of the nineteenth century and which spawned many enduring stereotypes of Native Americans both in the American and European imagination.

Part of Catlin’s *Indian Gallery* was a white buffalo Crow lodge, which Monkman replaced with a crystal tipi called *Théâtre de Cristal* (fig. 6) made entirely of strings of clear glass beads. On the inside it sports a glittering chandelier in the form of an upside

down phallic symbol, which most likely references Monkman's sexual orientation. The glittering lodge alludes both to the fact that Catlin's Indians once performed in a mirror-filled palace in France in 1845 and possibly to his preferred brand of champagne.

Furthermore, the glittering environment is symbolic of the refracted imagery regarding Native Americans over time, ranging from Edward S. Curtis' photography and so-called ethnographic silent movies, to paintings of Western landscapes and Indians (McIntosh 31). Moreover, the beaded tipi references Indian beadwork, an art form that is often seen as authentically native, although glass beads were introduced to Native Americans by white traders and missionaries who imported them originally from Venice and Bohemia.

Miss Chief is encountered in various forms, shapes and narratives as part of the installation *The Triumph of Mischief*. Inside the beaded tipi the video *Group of Seven Inches* is simultaneously projected four times onto a buffalo hide lying on the floor in the middle of the tipi. With homosexual overtones the video shows Miss Chief taking some white boys back in time. It investigates the role of film in the distortion of Native reality and history (McIntosh 39). The name of the video is also a word play on the "Group of Seven," which refers to a group of Canadian landscape painters from the early twentieth century who founded the first Canadian National art movement.

Part of the installation and replacing Catlin's dummies that were used to display Native dress is a life-size mannequin figure of Miss Chief (fig. 5). She exhibits one of her more outrageous warrior drag-queen outfits while being positioned in the middle of a flowerbed dais that brings elements of the wilderness to the installation as it behooves a savage Native warrior.

On the deep red walls of the gallery space surrounding the crystal tipi hang

Monkman's acrylic paintings, which are by and large based on nineteenth-century paintings that do not primarily depict Native Americans. Miss Chief and her male Indian forerunner of Monkman's earlier paintings are engaged in interactions with European white trappers, voyageurs, priests and cowboys, who are the typical protagonists in Western art created by artists such as Frederic S. Remington and Arthur F. Tait (figs. 7, 8). Yet, since Monkman's paintings are inverted variations of the common Indian and cowboy theme, Native Americans are displaying superiority on many levels and often perform revengeful acts in the form of overt or covert homosexual aggression as repayment for various wrongs committed in the past by representatives of Western culture. Examples of the latter can be found in Monkman's paintings *The Rape of Daniel Boone Junior*, *Artist and Model* and *Portrait of the Artist as Hunter* (figs. 9, 10, 11).

The twenty-one paintings that are part of the *The Triumph of Mischief* installation are framed with gilt and carved Baroque frames evoking the hushed, reverential atmosphere of a Western museum display. Since this imitation demands attention, due respect and unquestioning trust in the veracity of the rendered scenes from the viewer, Monkman is clearly mocking the uncritical way art is commonly consumed, especially in museum settings.

Among the paintings is also a set of five chromogenic prints on metallic paper called *Miss Chief: The Emergence of a Legend* from 2005 (figs. 12-16), which have been artificially manipulated to look like authentic, old photographic documents. We see Miss Chief acting both as performer and director in this parody of famous anthropologist Franz Boas' and photographer Curtis' faux ethnographic photo documentations. Although both men are known to have staged their photos to omit any traces of contamination with

white culture, both declared their work to be scientific and authentic in nature (McIntosh 37). In *Miss Chief, Vaudeville Star* (fig. 13) Monkman is impersonating and thereby critiquing the Native singer Miss Molly Spotted Elk who performed in New York in the 1920s and who was also an actor in one of the earliest films about Native culture (McIntosh 37). The *Trapper's Bride* (fig. 15), however, makes reference to a beloved painterly theme used amongst others by Alfred Jacob Miller (fig. 17), where a young Indian girl is married, or rather given, to a white trapper or frontiersman (Ketchum 31).

Monkman's second tipi *Boudoir de Berdache* (fig. 4, 73) is not based on any known element of Catlin's show, but might have been inspired by it, according to art historian David McIntosh. It is covered by sumptuous European brocade fabric and offers a stereo view of Monkman's film *Shooting Geronimo* on Miss Chief's "tipi tivi" inside (McIntosh 43). Furthermore, as proof of Miss Chief's contemporaneity and fashion sense, the visitor sees a brocade covered divan onto which has been thrown a Pendelton trade blanket and a fashionable Louis Vuitton covered leather quiver (fig. 18), as well as a bear skin on the floor in front. Grouped around the divan are several suitcases of Western design made of birch bark, yet decorated with the same Louis Vuitton pattern. The last incongruity consists of the tipi being lit by a glittering electric chandelier, symbolic of Monkman's aim to enlighten his viewers in regards to traditional viewpoints, myths and stereotypes. Reflecting both Monkman's mixed heritage and that over time European and Native cultures influenced each other, the sequence of incongruous juxtapositions is proof of Monkman's deep knowledge of Western as well as Native history and art history, including postcolonial theory.

By intentionally inverting the colonial representation of the indigenous people of

North America Monkman achieves his stated goal to “rearrange their genetic code, retro-projecting their conjoined postindian diva warrior self to restore representation as life and liberation, then and now” (McIntosh 44). Simultaneously, he reverses the death wish put upon Native Americans by Catlin, who wanted a pastoral place without Indians, and the Canadian Commissioner of the department of Indian Affairs from 1880-1932, Duncan Campbell Scott. The latter proclaimed his goal to get rid of the entire Indian problem by having them assimilated as fast as possible (McIntosh 42, 44).

The insertion of Miss Chief and other assertive Native Americans into most of Monkman’s artworks leads to the questioning of preexisting narratives regarding colonialism and Native American cultures, which includes as well the power relationship between the former colonizer and the colonized. The concept of Western civilization, complete with its inherently ambiguous and possibly contradicting definitions, lies at the heart of nearly all of Monkman’s paintings. Commonly interpreted as the sum total of values and beliefs espoused by European colonization and conquest, Western civilization, meaning an advanced stage or system of human social development as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, immediately evokes its opposite, the “savage,” the uncivilized “other,” the one in need of civilization.

Literary theorist Edward Said claims in his book Orientalism that Western civilization is a myth which only makes sense in the context of conquest, imperialism and suppression: “This is especially true of the United States, which today cannot seriously be described except as an enormous palimpsest of different races and cultures sharing a problematic history of conquests, exterminations, and of course major cultural and political achievements” (347). Despite Said’s critique, the concept of Western civilization

continues to be taught as and believed to be a self-evident set of historical narratives, paradigmatic values and Kulturgut infused with a sense of intellectual, cultural and spiritual superiority. Western civilization typically is believed to have its origins in Ancient Greek culture and is deeply rooted in Christian beliefs; in the United States it provided the basis of America's "Manifest Destiny," which in turn was the basis for America's westward expansion (Trouillot 20).

Since the sixteenth century the "savage" in North American narratives has been understood to be a representative of Native American culture. In the nineteenth century this assumption was reified in the art work of Catlin, further disseminated by the work of Karl Bodmer (Mulvey 88-89) and other painters of the West, and ultimately cemented by the Buffalo Bill shows in Europe and the United States. To this day Catlin's work is represented in art historical compilations as the work of an ethnographer who created a "visual and literary record of Native American life," where posture and facial expression are interpreted literally (Adams 744). The enduring stereotypical depictions of Native Americans in Western culture was the end result of this reification and at times is still being applied to numerous narratives and cinematic productions: the Indian is invariably a red-skinned Plains warrior, usually depicted as a Sioux, adorned with a war bonnet and typically seated on a horse. Through its very narrowness and exclusivity the stereotype cancels the diversity of North American peoples and separates Native Americans from their own history (Nemiroff 24), as even Native American children internalize Indian stereotypes by watching Western movies and playing cowboys and Indians (Trouillot 21).

Although the emblematic Indian warrior is a member of the subjugated populace, he is often rendered in his physical prime, a beautiful male specimen, virile, stoic, proud,

focused, and independent. He either represents the “Savage Indian” or the “Noble Savage,” the first being loaded with negative attributes, the second one with nostalgic connotations. The use of the word “savage” fits into another imperial strategy of exerting dominance and suppressing Native agency, namely the power of naming. People, lands, customs and gods were either given names referencing the colonialists or were described with belittling, derogatory and disparaging words, such as “primitive, inbred, prehistoric, primal, aboriginal, Native, primeval, uncivilized, crude, uncultivated, unsophisticated, austere, barbarian, savage, Neanderthal and antediluvian” (Young Man 98).

The prevalence of males in Indian stereotypes mirrors the preferential treatment of men entrenched in colonialists’ cultures. Accordingly, Native women were perceived as being subservient and in the background (Troccoli 167). The accompanying assumption of all male Natives being heterosexual is equally rooted in European values and has apparently not been questioned. The binary gender concept has been espoused in Western cultures for centuries and supported by various Christian denominations (Smith 45-46), although the first Christians to start converting Native Americans were the Franciscans, Jesuits and other Catholic orders. Many of these are responsible for atrocities against Native people, suppression of Native religions, loss of Native languages, and the vilification and suppression of alternative genders. Therefore, Monkman repeatedly singles out members of the Catholic Church to be questioned, exposed and mocked.

The concept of Western civilization also helped create the foundation of Western art history, which characteristically condenses thousands of years of non-western art, such as art from the Ancient Middle East, Egypt and nowadays even Australia, into a few



short chapters. It then begins expanding on Ancient Greek and Roman achievements, which lead seamlessly to the Middle Ages and then to the Renaissance (Adams 31-80), where the art historical scope suddenly broadens and deepens its inquiry. At the end of the eighteenth century Willhelm Friedrich Hegel already claimed that the pinnacle of Western painting had been achieved by Titian, Raphael and Da Vinci (Hatt 33). This belief has proved enduring through the present. Inextricably intertwined with and implicated in Western art history is again the Catholic Church, which played an important role in the shaping, development, patronage and dissemination of Western art.

Against the backdrop of well-established assumptions rooted in the tenets of Western civilization as well as Western art history traditions, Monkman's paintings can be seen as perverting, undermining, eroticizing, and enlightening, in addition to delighting and ultimately challenging centuries-old Western worldviews, thereby initiating a profound paradigm shift. His work reifies Homi Bhabha's claim in his essay "Border Lives: the Art of the Present," namely that "The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living."

In his installations, videos, photos and paintings, Monkman creates a borderline land that disrupts the past and the present by creating a moment of *déjà vu*, closely followed by the awareness of immense incongruity wrapped in humor. His inversion

subverts Morgan's doctrine of cultural evolution and demands a re-evaluation of Western viewpoints regarding Native culture, history, and achievements. In the meantime it encourages reflections on European strategies of imperialism, as well as ethnocentric claims by Western sciences. His artwork is effective on multiple levels, affecting political, social, and ideological viewpoints, as well as policies. By affirming his personal agency to bring about change, Monkman already subverts one of the main Western ideological constructs regarding Native cultures, namely the theory of assimilation which disallows any intentional individual action on the part of indigenous people in the grand scheme of history (Whiteley 132,159), which Monkman undermines by his successful artistic career.

## Chapter 2

### The Myth of the West-Its Manifestations and Implications

“I have for many years contemplated the race of the white man who are now spread over these trackless forests and boundless prairies, and I have flown to their rescue, that phoenix like, they may rise from the stain on a painter’s palette, and live forever with me on my canvas.” (*The Triumph of Mischief* installation<sup>15</sup>).

Monkman’s work reveals and investigates myths of various kinds, ranging from the claim that Catholic clergy are celibate heterosexual men, Indians fit into the two categories of the “savage Indian” or the “noble savage,” to the myth that cowboys and frontiersmen are tough, masculine males who defend women, children and property. He is also questioning stereotypical depictions of Native warriors as heterosexual males wearing war bonnets and sitting on the backs of horses. More importantly, though, Monkman investigates and exposes the destructive belief in the imminent demise of Native cultures as well as the concept of the Western part of the United States being pristine and untouched by human civilization.

According to Roland Barthes in his essay “Myth Today,” myths can be present in various manifestations. Not only do they exist in written form or in oral narratives, but they can also take on the shape of images. The insidious quality of myths is based on the fact that a myth “hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession; it is an inflexion” (Barthes 116). However, a myth naturalizes its meaning by obfuscating all deeper layers and intentions. It is therefore understood as an obvious fact shrouded in pleasing simplicity, which prevents critical questioning.

Some of these myths were disseminated by early Christian missionaries through their pamphlets, letters and writings to educate their flock at home and by scientists in

their publications. They were further naturalized through the printed word by writers such as James Fenimore Cooper and the German Karl May and cemented in the common consciousness most profoundly by the Buffalo Bill shows which toured Europe and the United States during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The latter is mainly responsible for the stereotype of the Native warrior which has found its way also into the realm of movies, and which is especially prevalent in Europe where the Sioux are admired and emulated by numerous German Indian hobbyists.

Among the visual artists of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries who perpetuated some or all of these myths we can list landscape painters such as Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran and Thomas Cole, Indian painters George Catlin and the Canadian Paul Kane, sculptors such as Frederic Remington, Charles M. Russell and James Earle Fraser, and the photographer Edward S. Curtis. Although at times staged and always edited, the work by Catlin and Curtis has often been taken as factual documents recording Native American cultures (Madill 28). President Roosevelt himself wrote in regards to Curtis' Indian encyclopedia of twenty volumes, called "The North American Indian," that in his eyes Curtis was doing the work of an ethnographer by giving us not only visual and written facts, but enduring truths about the vanishing race acquired by studying and living with them intimately (Adam 25). The myth regarding the truthfulness of Curtis' photographs reaches into the present, since his photos are still sold in souvenir shops in the Southwest as documents of the Native American past (Distant Drums).

Many myths that have been embedded in and supported by landscape paintings of the nineteenth century have persisted into the present without being examined in regards to their veracity or what consequences they elicited. One of the most sinister myths was

the one regarding the empty West that went hand-in-hand with the myth of the “vanishing race.” Both enticed settlers of European descent to move to the western part of the North American continent and claim the land as theirs. The settlement of the West was further accelerated by the Homestead Act of 1862 and the Dawes Act, adopted by Congress in 1887, which allotted formerly Indian tribal lands to individual Indians, with the surplus going to non-Indians. It also justified and secured their ownership of the land, including the use and exploitation of the resources found on the land, as well as their defense of their property against Native Americans. Depictions of the empty West also effectively silenced the Native voice by barely acknowledging or completely denying their presence, their historical relation to and rightful ownership of the land.

Albert Bierstadt was one of the most renowned painters of the American West, who incorporated many of the myths mentioned above in his oeuvre. It therefore comes as no great surprise that Monkman, whose goal is to expose and undermine persistent and perpetuated myths and stereotypes regarding Native cultures in conjunction with revealing the ethnocentric imperialism engaged by European immigrants and their descendants, chose some of the most iconic landscape paintings created by Bierstadt as the arena for his subversions. The accumulated ideological background of Romantic landscape paintings with their particular meaning for the young American nation became enmeshed with the polemic as well as political rhetoric of the time to create a rich and layered foil for Monkman to do his visual mischief.

Bierstadt was a German/American painter. Born in the German town of Solingen in 1830 he moved to the United States as a child. As an adult, however, he returned to Germany to study painting at the Düsseldorf School of Art in Düsseldorf, Germany, from

1853-1857. Active as a painter until 1902, Bierstadt won acclaim for his work in the United States, Germany, Austria, Prussia, Belgium and France (Ketchum 70). Many of his paintings are now in collections situated in the West, such as the Portland Art Museum in Portland, Oregon, the Oakland Museum of Art in Oakland, California, and the Seattle Art Museum in Seattle, Washington. In addition, many others can also be found in the Smithsonian Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. and in numerous other institutions across the United States.

Bierstadt is usually classified as belonging to the second generation of Hudson River School painters, a loosely connected group of Romantic landscape painters originally from and working in the northeastern part of the United States. It was founded by Thomas Cole and although the name “Hudson River school” was originally intended as a derogatory term to indicate parochialism, it later became a highly regarded national school of landscape painting, indebted to the landscape interpretations taught at the Düsseldorf School.

Some of the elements defining Romantic landscape paintings, prominent already at the end of the eighteenth century, are based on the English landscape painting tradition. The latter reflects the loss of common land through the politics of enclosure, which had negative social consequences for the middle and lower class in exchange for higher profit for landowners. The increased value of land also made its painterly depictions, in the form of rustic and picturesque scenes with meandering rivers and country lanes, more valuable. The land that was not put to agricultural use, but instead was left alone and turned into some sort of wilderness especially evoked nostalgic feelings in the viewer. The invention of the English Garden, an ideal wilderness, was meant to balance the loss

of the actual landscape, as the real land was fractured by parceled-off fields (Bermingham 9, 10). The fixation on nature after its loss can be found in literary examples of the late eighteenth century as well, where topics of nature and naturalness are highly ranked and imbued with moral significance (Bermingham 1).

Edged by towering granite cliffs, a sublime sunrise lights the valley of Bierstadt's *Yosemite Valley* (fig. 19) and lifts the spirit of the viewer, symbolizing what Miller calls the "moral uplift" (138). Yet the deliberate rows of trees in the middle ground suggest man-made changes to the valley, an ordering, gridding and organizing of space which contradicts notions of wilderness. This impression is supported by the omission of the debris that is commonly found in "real" wilderness areas, such as fallen tree tangles, log jams and sand or gravel bars which interrupt and change the flow of rivers. Although Bierstadt was known to make on-site oil sketches and take photographs (Ketchum 70), back in his studio he arrived at an organization of landscape elements that was reminiscent of the carefully landscaped English gardens popular at the time.

To explain the prestige that landscape paintings enjoyed in the United States during the nineteenth century, it is interesting to note that Cole's customers belonged to the Federalist elite, where culture was one of the last prerogatives of a group of wealthy patrons that identified themselves as landed aristocrats with great power and influence (Wallach 82). These art supporters were bankers, landowners, merchants and lawyers, initially resistant to accepting democracy and the industrial revolution. They aligned themselves with the aesthetic principles adopted by the English aristocracy with its preference of sublime landscapes and the picturesque found in real and imagined landscapes. Hand-in-hand with these aesthetic ideals went the concepts of patriotism and

morality, all of which was to find expression in commissioned art. Due to the diminishing influence of the aristocracy, nostalgia for the past was a common tenor and the reason that Cole painted nearly deserted landscapes. A lone Indian is sitting close to a grave in *The Lonely Cross* (fig. 20) and a solitary hunter can be seen contemplating the scenery in *Autumn in the Catskills* (fig. 21). It explains Cole's general predilection for showing an imaginary American countryside before settlement, commerce and industrialization "contaminated" the land. Through the omission of contemporary phenomena such as trains, industrial buildings and commerce and applying his expert skills in naturalistic rendering, Cole made the imagined pristine landscape utterly believable (Wallach 87, 88).

Yet Cole lived and practiced in Europe and the eastern United States. He did not venture into the largely unknown and unsettled West like the second generation of Hudson River School painters, such as Bierstadt, Frederic Edwin Church and Thomas Moran. They had in common a predilection for large, idealized landscapes composed from a blend of observed, invented and reconfigured details, a preference for a sense of tranquility in the fore-and middle ground and the use of a soft, almost supernatural light reminiscent of luminous moments during dusk or dawn. This lighting style was called "luminism" and was consciously applied to heighten the emotional drama of the scene (Portland 54, 9). In contrast to the conservative first generation of Hudson River School painters, these artists could also be perceived as aligning themselves with the new democratic and social sentiments of the latter part of the nineteenth century that found their expression in movements favoring settling the West, creating National Parks and establishing city parks to bring nature back into an urban setting as an antidote to the alienation of the working class from nature and itself (Wallach 99).



Although Bierstadt did not consider himself to be a factual recorder of the unfamiliar expanses and monumentality of the landscape of the American West, he visited the West and the Rocky Mountains repeatedly on journeys that were part of the American Western Expansion. In his paintings he amalgamated locations he observed, experienced and sketched with standard depictions of the Alps, Europe's ultimate sublime landscape. For example, he placed the Matterhorn into Rocky Mountain scenes and invented non-existent rivers, which were then subordinated to the highly emotional and dramatic play of light and dark (Ketchum 70). As a consequence of this fusion Bierstadt's landscape translations turned the wild "uncivilized" Western landscape into a domesticated rendition of the West (Bassnett-McGuire xv), while simultaneously depicting it as slightly exotic and enticing. Not readily comprehensible to viewers of different cultures, the interpretation of sublime landscapes is a learned one, however, or, in the words of cultural theorist Jonathan Bordo, a "practiced relation to pictures" (309). It is based on aesthetic concepts relevant to Romanticism and involves the feelings of nostalgia and sentimentality, as well as the denial of reality, as it is reflected in Ruskin's approach to connect nature, art and society. Inherent in Ruskin's concept was an anti-industrialist attitude, whereby man should not succumb to consumerism's pressure and technology. Furthermore, Ruskin puts emphasis on a harmonious co-existence between man and nature. He saw a divine and consistent plan underlying a landscape, whereby the artist would reveal the plan and the truth and imbue the landscape genre with new moral and spiritual content (Daniels 5, 6).

Most museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, that own paintings by Bierstadt never question in detail the authenticity of the location

depicted. It is only noted that both Church and Bierstadt relied on the novel technology of photography to provide source material for their work, in their words, to help them “record the sights” (Hibbard 473). An exception, however, can be found in the catalog of the Portland Art Museum. Due to the proximity of the museum to the asserted location of Bierstadt’s painting *Mt. Hood* (fig. 22), the writer of the catalog entry, art historian Lisa Andrus-Rivera, is acutely aware of the many changes Bierstadt performed regarding location, scale and form in order to increase the grandeur and awe inspired by the view of Mount Hood. She mentions that Lone Rock is farther upstream on the Columbia River and that the outline of Mount Hood is taken from views from the city of Portland and not from the northern shore of the Columbia River (54).

In effect, an accurate rendition of any given location was not even considered essential. Art historian Angela Miller offers evidence that the consumption and identification with a specific landscape was limited to rendered landscapes only, while the tangible place, even if it existed within a person’s close environment, was seldom the explicit object of contemplation, cultural edification or moral uplift (12).

Painted renderings of landscapes, however, presented other benefits for city dwellers. Landscape paintings brought the outdoors inside and assisted in edifying and morally supporting the urban population, as “they offered an aesthetically controlled order that symbolically enacted cultural and social scenarios impossible to engineer in reality” (Miller 13). The ordering and subtle civilizing of the wilderness observable in many nineteenth-century landscape paintings was part of a forward-looking agenda. It was expected that it would impose order and discipline onto society and prevent social uprisings and anarchical tendencies. While the artist skillfully balanced contrasting

elements such as various spatial depths, lights and darks, different moods and colors, a similar harmonious ordering was anticipated to be engendered in the social fabric of a functioning republic. Similarly, around the middle of the nineteenth century landscapes were read in terms of character and were thought to influence the character of the people living there. In this vein the large scale of Bierstadt's paintings mirrored the largeness of the national character and supported Americans' claim to greatness (Miller 9). Also, a painted landscape that a large portion of the population could admire and identify with was thought to reinforce national unity and transcend the politics of contention (Miller 10), as every small detail was seen as part of a larger picture which would be transferable to nationalistic concern in the years preceding the civil war (Miller 13-15).

Bierstadt often incorporated small figures into his painting. Together with a group of white horsemen leading their horses to an encampment farther in the distance, the sketching artist and his horse are present in his painting *Looking up the Yosemite Valley* (fig. 23). The relative size of human beings and the landscape is an indication of the scale realized in many of his monumental landscapes. It also symbolizes the oneness of man and nature as demanded by the precepts of Romanticism. Art historian Ann Bermingham points out an interesting correlation, namely that the figure has faded from landscape painting either by shrinking in size or through omission (6) since industrialization changed the landscape in Europe in the early nineteenth century, thereby placing greater emphasis and importance on the landscape itself.

Bierstadt's paintings are proof of this development as well. The size of his figures is proportionally small, conferring an all-important role on the landscape. The spreading industrialization, which was accompanied by the growth of urban environments, pollution

and deteriorating health, requested, by dint of contrast, an idealized landscape as a sought-after antidote that would offer the illusion of openness, clean air, personal space and beauty. At the same time, however, the smallness of the painted figures diminished the chance that moral questions would crop up in the viewer's mind regarding ownership of land and its history, which would, by necessity, include the acknowledgement of prior occupants (Bermingham 12-13).

In yet another Bierstadt painting called *Yosemite Valley* (fig. 19) from 1868, however, there is only a small deer grazing in the foreground, which emphasizes the grandeur but above all the emptiness of the western wilderness with all its connotations and implications. However, witnesses are required for the concept of the "wilderness" to be accepted as a reality. It needs to be perceived by a human being or an animal that is implicitly observed by a person, such as a viewer contemplating a painting. In addition, the intentional implication that humans enjoy supremacy over the land is augmented by the observer feeling secure in the visual possession of the land seen from an elevated standpoint, while he himself is safely "outside the frame...enjoying a 'predatory view' of [the] landscape" (Mitchell 16).

Depictions of Native Americans are rarely found in Bierstadt's paintings, which might reflect the common assumptions of the time that Native Americans were either regarded as non-existent, a vanishing race destined to disappear from the face of the earth in the near future, or a threat to civilization. The first viewpoint regarding the non-existence of Native inhabitants of the West is clearly embedded in the two Bierstadt images mentioned above, which instead focus on the widespread and to this day persistent myth of the pristine Western wilderness discovered by trappers and traders in

the early nineteenth century and home to wild animals only. The wilderness is assumed to be untouched by any human beings as well as untainted by European civilization with its advancing industrialization, yet the landscape is presented as ready to embrace Western civilization once the wave of westward expansion arrives.

The word “wilderness” is often used as a name by itself, denoting a place that is understood as an empty space, something unknown, unexplored, unused, and uncivilized, and therefore of no use to anybody. This presumption inherently disallows the presence of aboriginal people who might experience the same landscape as exactly the opposite of “wilderness,” rather as a familiar and useful place, intimately known and an essential part of one’s and one’s group’s identity through memories and history. The notion of wilderness therefore was a prerequisite concept prior to or concurrent with imperial ideologies that included goals such as colonizing, civilizing and converting (Bordo 292-294). As Angela Miller points out in her book Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics 1825-1875, landscape painting: “contributed to reconciling the contradictions within a national ideology that sanctified wilderness at the same time that it glorified an emergent market culture that found little value in untransformed, unimproved nature” (15).

At the same time, the notion of wilderness is part and parcel of the sublime landscape, where the juxtaposition of pastoral landscape and dramatic skies makes the spectator feel small and in awe of natural forces and unforeseen dangers. This visual organization could be interpreted as either a metaphor for the struggle to tame the wilderness or for the catastrophic influences of settlements and industrialization on the primeval landscape (Wallach 88, 89). Furthermore, life in the wilderness was

characteristically touted as superior to life in Europe due to its novelty, the requirement of courage and the fact that its resource potential had not yet been exhausted (Bordo 295-7). It thereby helped build national pride in the young nation.

In order to not destroy the desired feeling of admiration and trepidation, which at times transitions to dread and even terror, the painter of sublime landscapes must avoid the inclusion of signs of human domestication of the land, such as dwellings with hearths emitting smoke, graves, cairn or roads. This need explains why the human figures typically found in representations of wilderness landscapes are those of transient observers, on their way from and to familiar Western civilization, not residents who have a deep connection to the land.

These visitors are usually of European descent and offer the intended viewers an opportunity to identify with them. Both viewers and painted witnesses share the same cultural background and outlook regarding the future of the “wilderness.” Because the witnesses have not known the landscape since childhood and carry no memories or narratives of it, they regard “the wilderness” as an alien, foreign landscape and christen it a “New World.” They find themselves in the position of frontiersmen who are leaving the first marks of Western history on the landscape. In doing so, the witnesses ignore and suppress the presence as well as the history of prior inhabitants (Bordo 309).

By assuming seemingly uncontested the ownership of the land the witnesses implicitly invite other pioneers to come and settle the land. This is particularly evident in written accounts of “discoveries,” where the existence of Native scouts and Native support in terms of supplies and local knowledge of the landscape was deliberately omitted in order to aggrandize the findings and deeds of the white explorers. At the same

time, the true and harsh realities of life on the Western frontier were also suppressed in favor of a nostalgic representation of an American Garden of Eden, where violence, want and despair are visually non-existent. This allows the viewers to be removed from their daily troubles and instead be immersed in the ideal and grandiose (Bordo 310).

Furthermore, landscape representations of the West infused American viewers with strong nationalistic feelings since the images allowed them to identify with a landscape that was equal to any sublime landscape found in the Alps. Since the landscape of the West was unique it set the United States apart from Europe, thereby cementing its reasons to be a nation and gave proof of its exceptionalism (Miller 16). As it was also seen as a young nation, the depiction of a landscape in a young cultural state, i.e. that of primeval wilderness, gave visual support to this idea.

Not coincidentally, linguistic expressions of the time regarding discourses on nationalism named landscape elements such as rivers, lakes and mountain ranges as body parts, such as ligaments, heart and lifeblood, to suggest the unity and interconnectedness of the land and the nation. Visual imagery of this kind furthermore rose above the increasing division between the social and economic preferences in the South and the North. “They developed their own national audience, engendering a set of common experiences and creating a set of reference points shared by people otherwise unconnected” (Miller 8).

These complex historical connotations are embedded in nineteenth-century landscape paintings of the American West and provide the necessary background regarding the host of ideological forces Monkman is addressing and subverting in his paintings. Through the historical context, contemporaneous views of religion, philosophy

and society as well as analogies found in the politics and literary arts of the time, the accumulated connotations of nineteenth-century landscape paintings add multiple layers of cultural meaning to the interpretation (Daniels 1, 2). By re-painting well-known landscape paintings of the American West from the nineteenth century and inserting Native Americans into them, Monkman not only rebuts colonial concepts relating to the depictions of the land, but also re-claims both the landscape and the land for Native people. He thereby changes the standard narrative of conquest and Western civilization and instead validates the Native viewpoint which has been omitted from history (Madill 28). Monkman summarizes his strategy as follows: “If land is considered to be property, the original paintings are intellectual property. ...Through my painstaking theft of these landscapes I invade the colonial imagination, dismantling and subverting the found vision of ‘The West’ from within” (Ash-Milby 20).



## Chapter 3

### Encounter with *The Triumph of Mischief*

“I have the opportunity of the free use of nature’s undisguised models from which to draw fair conclusions in the sciences of physiognomy and phrenology with full notes on their character, history, and their anatomy” (*The Triumph of Mischief* installation 14).

*The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 2) is the second largest painting hung on a wall of Monkman’s *The Triumph of Mischief* installation. The title of this piece catches the viewer’s attention, as Monkman typically conveys his postcolonial and postmodernist approach already in the artwork’s name, even before the viewer has had a chance to look at the piece. Giving titles to artwork constitutes a deliberate act of naming, which in itself harbors not only signs of ownership, indications of the piece’s content, or other relevant thoughts the artist might have had while producing it, but also directs the viewer’s expectations and, ultimately, the interpretation of the artwork. It is here that colonialist implications reveal themselves first.

Naming by itself constituted an important tool for imperialistic purposes. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot explains in his book Silencing the Past:

The naming of the ‘fact’ is itself a narrative of power disguised as innocence...Naming the fact thus already imposes a reading and many historical controversies boiled down to who has the power to name what. To call ‘discovery’ the first invasions of inhabited lands by Europeans is an exercise in Eurocentric power that already frames future narratives of the event so described. Contact with the West is seen as the foundation of

historicity of different cultures. Once discovered by Europeans, the Other finally enter the human world.” (114), and “Terminologies demarcate a field, politically and epistemologically. Names set up a field of power” (115).

For example, Monkman mirrors the conscious act of conquest through re-naming paintings or sculptures that have a title with a colonialist subtext. He thereby changes the standard narrative of conquest and Western civilization and validates the Native viewpoint which has been omitted from history (Madill 28). By naming one painting *Not the End of the Trail* (fig. 24) while appropriating, altering and prominently displaying Fraser’s sculpture *End of the Trail* (fig. 25), Monkman uncompromisingly contradicts the notion of the “vanishing race” embedded in Fraser’s work and title and instead opens up the future for Native Americans, replete with positive expectations. In *The Triumph of Mischief* the pun on “Miss Chief” allows not only a Native American, but a third gender Native American person at that, to be accepted and celebrated as the leader of the dominant race in Monkman’s imaginary pictorial world, while the word “triumph” recalls traditional uses such as the triumphal arches built to honor successful Roman military generals. It is a clarion call that Monkman’s world view will prevail. All the same, the title also explicitly includes the word “mischief,” which reminds us to take the painting’s content with a healthy dose of humor and not to take offense.

Before beginning to critically unravel the multi-layered meaning of *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 2) it might be helpful to formally deconstruct how the sequence of the different events are constructed, while being at the same time fully aware that each observation is loaded with inherent and connotative significance. On first sight the viewer

is presented with a large canvas painted with acrylic and hung on the wall of the installation *The Triumph of Mischief*. It measures eighty-four by one hundred thirty-two inches and is framed by a heavy, golden and ornately carved frame, which is similar to the frames used around Monkman's other paintings.

The majestic landscape in the background is instantly recognizable as a copy of Albert Bierstadt's *Looking up the Yosemite Valley* (fig. 23). As Bierstadt's painting measures only thirty-six by fifty-four inches, it becomes apparent that Monkman increased the size of his copy more than fourfold, presumably to accommodate the many figures cavorting in the foreground of the landscape, as well as the myriad significant details incorporated in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 2).

Although Monkman copied Bierstadt's landscape meticulously, he omitted the horsemen in the middle distance as well as the artist employed in sketching in the middle foreground and his horse. Monkman's palette seems to be less yellowed than the range of colors found in several reproductions of Bierstadt's painting, which might be attributed to the yellowing of the original varnish applied over the dried oil paint. It could also possibly be explained by the mediation effect of a digitalized photograph viewed on a computer screen. As such, reproductions of this painting can be found on the internet as well as in art books in slightly different color variations. Monkman's rendering of highlights seems to be somewhat abrupt and separated from the core color. This might be explained by the shorter drying time of acrylic paint, which disallows the subtle blending achievable with oil paint.

The most astounding difference, however, can be found in the foreground. The viewer no longer gazes at a quiet, gentle place which derives its spaciousness not least of

all from the contrast in size between the small figures and the surrounding huge, vertical cliffs, but instead is bewildered by the sight of a cacophonous and tumultuous scene full of action, which, through its rich colors, content, size, and movement, is poised to overshadow the sublime setting. As a result, Bierstadt's landscape with its otherworldly serenity has been reduced to a foil for a scene filled with frenetic human action.

In several instances the milling figures in the foreground are engaged in acts of imminent violence, which are balanced, however, by performances of dance, music, and ritual. Separate narratives are grouped around the focal point of Miss Chief staring down Picasso (fig. 26). A variety of animals, such as an upright growling grizzly bear, a group of miniature grisaille bears in hot pursuit of two small gray men, several horses and horse-like creatures from Greek mythology and a barking dog are all active participants in the carnivalesque scene. The only exception is the white bison calf standing in the back, which quietly creates a backdrop for the dancer in front (fig. 27).

Of the total of forty-three figures, including the three airborne cherubs (fig. 26) and minotaurs, who are counted both as horses and human beings, only the two upright men close to the right-hand edge of the canvas are not engaged in some sort of physical activity (fig. 28). It appears, though, as if some unspoken communication seems to happen between them via the mirror which the young, blond frontiersman is holding in his right hand. Among the numerous actions taking place we recognize chasing, dancing, drumming, swirling, lifting, straining and restraining, striding, exaggeratedly posing in uncomfortable stances, kidnapping, sparring, sodomizing and getting dressed. Bierstadt's intentions of creating a space that invites meditation and feelings of humility when facing a sublime landscape have been displaced, disrupted and subverted into a loud theatre

accommodating numerous acts of surreal human comedy, not quite to be taken at face value, as Marcel Duchamp's urinal in the left bottom corner cautions (fig. 29).

Monkman's figures loom large in the foreground compared to Bierstadt's original figures, which appear to be seamlessly embedded in the landscape. The viewer is facing the participants close-up, from a central viewing point just outside the frame, around which all activity is organized in a large foreshortened figure-eight configuration. The nested ovals of action reach across the canvas without touching the edges of the pictorial field. Since the gazes of the actors at the action's periphery face inwards, the tension is sustained throughout the composition, while the viewer's gaze is constantly re-directed towards the focal point, namely Miss Chief. Furthermore, the frame of tall trees paralleling the vertical edges of the canvas firmly holds the crowd of humanity together; not a single creature is seen leaving or even displaying any intention of exiting the scene.

Only in this secluded forest clearing, imagined and painted one hundred and fifty years ago, has Monkman's improbable conglomeration of real and unreal creatures from widely different time periods a chance to be convincing. In order to provide further support for the tenuous maintenance of the imaginary real, any allusions to the contemporaneous reality of Yosemite National Park are omitted. The event's credibility would be immediately destroyed if a straying twenty-first century backpacker were to accidentally happen upon it. Without doubt, the viewer would identify with the backpacker and join him in interpreting the scenario as a movie set in chaos. Due to its very enclosed nature, however, the chaos seems to have received the freedom to perform the so far un-interpretable actions. Since the Greek mythological figures and the drag-queen figure of Miss Chief are in style and dress completely incompatible with the

nineteenth-century background, the action in the foreground has become removed from any tethers of chronology and has become timeless. It is interesting to note that the feeling of safety and permissibility is both necessary for the display of events to unfold and also highly ironic, as the melee is actually relentlessly threatening its participants by way of throttling, kidnapping, chasing and molesting.

At first sight, the viewer recognizes the landscape as a Romantic depiction of Yosemite Valley (fig. 23). Since Bierstadt's original goal was to create a pastoral setting inside a huge and dramatic space that could be found only in the American West, which impressive dimensions and grandeur would inevitably infuse Americans with pride regarding their national landscape treasure, a certain set of expectations are raised regarding the content of the painting. Something sublime, something with deep moral and spiritual meaning is expected to be discovered in the landscape with its as yet undecipherable mass of people, animals and objects.

Monkman's large and rowdy figures, however, draw attention to the seething foreground, causing the grandeur of the backdrop scene to plummet instantly. At the same time, the landscape's status as an American symbol for moral superiority is diminished and exalted feelings are brought down to more human proportions. The shrunken space of Bierstadt's Yosemite Valley changes its function in a matter of seconds from focal point to a foil for a set-up which critiques many assumptions fundamental to American feelings of identity present in Bierstadt's time. While Monkman's arrangement negates the original meaning of the appropriated painting, it imperialistically occupies the landscape in a mischievous way, as it is a highly suitable space for a timeless carnival to take place. Additionally, the piece derives a deeper

meaning from the underlying Bierstadt painting due to the host of intrinsic connotations and subtext inherent in the Romantic landscape.

By definition, the space in a rendered landscape painting is set and fixed, yet the time-based reflection and refraction of the details in the foreground causes the reading of the landscape to meander, rise and shrink and ultimately change from a Romantic and uplifting panorama to a sign of colonization. By passing through phases of recognition, expectation, outrage, and laughter, the viewer finally arrives at the insight that the painting has morphed from a supposedly harmless pleasing landscape prospect to a multilayered critique of the American colonial past. If we include the rapid change of emotion that leads to a new interpretation of the landscape's function, from a deep background space to a mere landscape foil, then we can claim that the landscape is partaking in the theatrical action aspect of the melee. This multifaceted inversion of the landscape's role is one of many instances where Monkman's skillful subversion of images, titles, content and intent of so-called iconic art from the past catches the viewer unaware.

Furthermore, through its recession into deep space Bierstadt's landscape still offers the viewer a counterbalance and respite to the restiveness occurring in the foreground; the viewer's mind can take a break to wander around in an uncrowded space, while trying to digest the layers of meaning inherent in the spectacle and put them into some meaningful relationship to the landscape around it. In due course, the viewer realizes that the background landscape plays a pivotal part in the development of meaning as it retains the memory of colonial ideologies and therefore provides valuable clues regarding the postcolonial analysis of the foreground action (Steward 1).

Monkman's figures consist of a mix of men from the early nineteenth century, interacting with Greek mythological beings and some early twentieth and twenty-first century personalities. Additionally, a multitude of connotations are evoked by representatives of different ethnicities. Three different skin colors are recognizable in the painting: light grayish pink for white people, such as trappers, frontiersmen, Catholic priest, Greeks and, surprisingly, for a group of dancers on the left side of the painting reminiscent of Tlingit Indians from Kane's *Medicine Mask Dance* painting (fig. 30); a warm medium brown has been used to distinguish the bodies of Native Americans from the deep dark brown color identifying the four African people in close proximity to Miss Chief. Poignantly, the three cherubs, iconic spiritual beings usually associated with the Catholic Church, are depicted here in three different skin tones as well (fig. 26).

In addition to people of different ethnicities and nationalities, there is also the implied presence of the various painters, such as Catlin, Bierstadt, Kane, David, Michelangelo, Gast, and Bosch, whose work Monkman quotes. All of them profoundly affect the interpretation of the painting. As eminent literary theorist Mieke Bal phrases it in her book Narratology: "In this respect, recent revivals of epic emerging out of postcolonial recuperations of space offer a great challenge to any deterministic presuppositions about the development of genres. Epic tends to become bound up less with a glorious mythical past of conquest than with a resistance to such conquests and a renewed attempt of the former colonized to 'take place': to provide the occupied space with a fabula that affirms their own belonging to it. Space then becomes a site of memory" (137).



Even though sound is expected to be naturally absent in a painting, here it seems to be included by ways of the imagination. Many mouths and muzzles are open, indicating grunts of exertion and frustration, while the sounds of attack and threatening song are accentuated by the rhythmic beating of a hand drum. The imaginary sound wave emanating from the foreground melee highlights its inherent passion and fanaticism, while simultaneously releasing racial and political tensions accumulated over centuries.

Furthermore, paralleling the variety of skin colors presented in the participants in *The Triumph of Mischief*, the horses sport different colors as well. Winged Pegasus is light gray or dun and there is a bay horse, while another one is a blue roan. Again another horse is a dappled gray, while the minotaur jumping over the central log in the very foreground has the coloring and patterning of a pinto horse (fig. 31).

Seven figures are Greek mythological beings sporting human and animal details. There is Pan with his goat legs and human body, as well as another satyr who needs help getting up in the foreground, while Pegasus is recognizable by his two mighty wings. The Minotaur is identifiable by the head of a steer attached to his human body, while the two centaurs can be recognized by the fusion of male torsos with horse bodies.

The large overall figure-eight composition underlying the spectacle in the painting's foreground can be broken up into several interlocking ovals. The Indian dancers around Miss Chief and Picasso constitute the largest sub-oval. It is connected to the large open oval, created by the three horses to the right of center, through the opposing yet parallel movements by Pan and the chasing pair of Buffalo dancer and Minotaur (fig. 32). The oval to the right, which begins with one centaur rearing up onto its hind legs on the far right, is continued by the two horses jumping over the log (fig.

31); it then merges again into the oval consisting of the Native dancers around Miss Chief and thereby creates an uninterrupted flow. The emergent pulsating force acts like a wave, with ripples of diminishing force spreading outwards to several smaller groups of people.

Three separate oval groups orbit to the left of the large group of Native dancers; the Shoshone Indian Sacagawea is holding on to her husband Toussaint Charbonneau. The trapper is trying in vain to come to the rescue of explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, who, in turn, are struggling in the stranglehold of a grizzly. The curve created by these two groups continues to lead the viewer's attention further towards the foreground by dint of the three dancing Northwest Coast Indians (fig. 33).

A small circle of slightly bent dancers surrounds the focal point of Miss Chief, who prominently stands erect with three cherubs whirling above her head. Two of them are trying to grab Miss Chief's swirling magenta shawl, while a third is holding a wreath of flowers in its hands with the obvious intention of crowning Miss Chief. Inserted into this circle are the four black men, of whom one is in a crouched position to push a reluctant Picasso towards Miss Chief (fig. 26).

Yet another oval is created to the right and behind the sweeping curve of horses and centaurs, connecting several smaller groups. Starting to the right of Pan we notice the Indian on horseback, who appears to be kidnapping and molesting a Catholic priest. We are then led to the Indian who is imitating a scene from Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* by putting flowers into the anus of his kneeling and unsuspecting opponent, who seems to be a nineteenth-century California gold seeker (fig. 34). Even further to the right we see two Native Americans who are possibly fighting over the ownership of Pegasus (fig. 35). Next to them there is yet another group of three men,

consisting of two frontiersmen standing in a group with Catlin's warrior Pigeon's Egg Head. One of the frontiersmen can be seen pulling up his pants, while he is looking slightly embarrassed at the conflicts playing out in front of him. Through the power of his gaze the viewer's attention is led back to the chain of the three horses/centaurs in the foreground.

The effect of the multiple nested ovals is that the viewer follows different visual pathways around the whole scenario, until the power of the focal point exerts its attraction and invites the viewer to use Miss Chief as a starting point for puzzling out the different conundrums embedded in the complex scene.

## Chapter 4

### Carnival as Overarching Theme

“They are however a little inclined to stoop, as they do not throw the chest out with the shoulders back quite as much as the French. But, their movement is graceful and quick; and in war and in chase, I think they are equal to any of the European tribes.....They are noble, gentlemanly, and high minded, although they are often prone to argument and fierce bouts of independence.” (*The Triumph of Mischief* installation 15).

Carnivals are ancient rituals and festivities which have retained certain common features although their manifestations changed over time (Bahktin 250). Their roots reach back to ancient pagan times, such as the Greek feast of Dionysia, a festival during the month of March with emphasis on dramatic performances (Encyclopaedia Britannica). The Romans celebrated the month-long Saturnalia, a feast dedicated to the agricultural god Saturn, which was later usurped by the Catholic Church for Christ’s birthday (Christmas). During the German Fastnacht or Fasching the winter spirits are driven off (Bahktin 256).

Carnivals or carnivalesque scenes also underlie many iconic images of Western art history, ranging from famous Northern Renaissance pieces, such as Hieronymus Bosch’s *The Ship of Fools* (fig. 36) and *The Haywain* (fig. 37), to the late nineteenth-century work of James Ensor. Ensor’s painting *The Entry of Christ into Brussels* (fig. 38) mixed religious themes with those of carnivals and influenced later surrealist and expressionist artists.

Today carnivals are mostly associated with the Catholic liturgical calendar in that the self-indulgent festivities directly precede the sobering period of Lent. By reversing the existing order carnivals allow people to freely mingle without hierarchical restraints of status, law and manners in lax, sensual and variously inappropriate ways (Bahktin

251). It is taken for granted that the inversions will not permanently affect the order of things, but rather that, after a few days or weeks of licentiousness and reversal of gender as well as power roles, the traditional order will be renewed and accepted without resentment or social upheaval during the following year (Hyman 10, 16).

Although certain carnivalesque elements can be found in almost all of Monkman's work, in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 2) we find a situation that appears entirely and consistently based on carnival precepts. Ranging from the use of masks to sexually nonstandard behavior, we can find almost all elements of a carnival including the carnival smile and multiple instances of binary pairings (Bahktin 256).

The contrast in emotion between the foreground of *The Triumph of Mischief* and Bierstadt's landscape in the background is reminiscent of the middle panel of Hieronymus Bosch's *The Haywain* (fig. 37), where the visual critique of rampant greed and the secularization of the Catholic Church also unfolds in front of a peaceful landscape stretching out to the far horizon (Hagen 86). The carnival-like scene in Bosch's painting mixes people from different social classes with half human, half animal fantasy figures in grotesque situations saturated with moral questioning. We find parallels in Monkman's painting, although he employs a different set of players and advances a number of post-colonial goals.

In *The Triumph of Mischief* people from different historical times, ethnicities, realities, professions and social standing, as far removed from each other as Picasso (fig. 26) and Catlin's warrior Pigeon's Egg Head (fig. 28), participate in a whirlwind of activity, where every conceivable order of power and social expectation has been inverted. Traditional standards and viewpoint are turned upside down in order to allow a

new awareness and comprehension to recalibrate them.

According to Bakhtin, a “carnival is the place for working out in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half-play-acted form, a new mode of interrelationship between individuals, [which is] counterposed to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of non-carnival life” (251). Although a carnival heavily critiques existing power relationships in its travesties and power inversions, its foremost purpose is to provoke laughter and a sense of released tension.

Every type of carnival has certain features in common, such as the presence of a crowd where the attendants are not divided into actors and spectators, but where everyone present actively participates. Equally common is the extensive use of masks and other forms of disguises, the presentation of an upside-down world order and a variety of grotesque bodies (Hyman 15). Carnivals typically take place in public spaces only, such as streets and squares, and not in private ones, to which Monkman adheres by placing his carnival in an open clearing in Yosemite National Park, which is admired by the general population as one of America’s greatest public treasures.

Carnivals are also occasions where “the latent sides of human nature [are permitted] to reveal and express themselves” (Bakhtin 251). This particular aspect allows Monkman the freedom to include references to homosexuality without distracting the viewer from the larger issue of challenging the construction of Western epistemologies.

One of the most central features of a carnival is the coronation of the carnival “king” and the parallel de-crowning of a prominent figure, both of which serve as metaphors for death and renewal in nature and the concept of “constructive death.” These elements are presented with a certain amount of ambivalence (Bakhtin 253). Other parts

regularly included are dichotomous pairings of opposites, irregular use of daily-life implements, threats of violence, blasphemy, debasement and sexual innuendo, reversal of gender roles and fools, and a specific type of carnival laughter where mockery and exultation are conflated (Bakhtin 254).

Nearly all of the characteristics mentioned above are evident in *The Triumph of Mischief*. The king of the carnival is once more inverted as he takes on the shape of the assertive drag queen Miss Chief (fig. 26), who is about to be crowned by three hovering cherubs holding a flower wreath above her. Her ethnicity, nationality and sexual orientation are unlikely features to recommend her for the position of royalty, or, conversely, make her an excellent choice for carnival king/queen. In her position and pose, however, Miss Chief is also reminiscent of the “noble savage,” standing erect and stoic in the middle of turmoil. However, this impression is immediately contradicted by the stereotype of the “noble savage” which requests a heterosexual, virile warrior and not a drag queen for this role. All these interpretations following each other in close order buffet the viewer who needs his presence of mind to not lose track of the mutually contradicting arguments in order to come to the conclusion that Monkman challenges ingrained expectations regarding positions of status, stereotypical typing of Native Americans and pigeonholing issues of gender.

If Miss Chief acts as king, then the group of Native American dancers surrounding her comprises her retinue, while Picasso, arguably the king of Modern Art, is clearly being deposed, ousted and reviled by Monkman. As it is a make-believe situation, though, embedded in a highly surrealist painting, Picasso does not get a fair hearing, but instead is indiscriminately labeled as villain. He is reluctantly being pushed in front of

Miss Chief where he is about to be interrogated concerning his crimes in connection with his modernist art, which was instrumental in the appropriation and decontextualization of African tribal art in the early twentieth century.

Additionally, Monkman inserts many instances of parodying doubles intended to provoke laughter (Bakhtin 255) and elicit novel conclusions and insights. They are encountered in the bizarre chasing game between a Native American buffalo dancer and his almost look-alike Aegean counterpart, the Minotaur (fig. 32), who, not co-incidentally, also served as Picasso's sensuous alter ego in many of his drawings and prints (fig. 39). The figure of the Minotaur then possibly leads to the creation of yet another pair of unlikely doubles, since Miss Chief normally fulfills the role of Monkman's alter ego. In a parallel fashion it might be concluded that Monkman intends to not only equal Native culture with ancient Greek culture (an argument I will elaborate later), but also his own achievements as an artist with those of Picasso.

Furthermore, in an unlikely game of cowboys and Indians, one Indian on horseback is trying to lasso a Greek centaur (fig. 31). In this doubly-inverted pairing it is unclear who exactly plays the role of the cowboy and who is supposed to play the Indian. The cowboy, supposedly a dressed, civilized human being, is played here by an Indian wearing a military jacket over his loincloth, whereas the Indian, a so-called "savage," is performed by a revered Greek mythological being that belongs to a culture that is regarded as the foundation of Western civilization. The climax of role reversal can be found in the fact that the centaur has teasingly caught the lasso rope in his hand thereby avoiding being caught and held captive, which frustrates the Indian cowboy behind him to no end. By parodying a game that is played by white and Indian children alike,



standardized roles as found in countless Western movies are put on their heads, revealing stereotypical power relationships in the distribution of roles and race. The Indian warrior is expected to be primitive but heroic, sneaky but skilled, while the cowboy is supposedly the defender of white civilization, masculine and heterosexual. However, Monkman's Indian cowboy negates even the latter expectations as he appears aroused in male-only society. In addition, he is wearing an "uncivilized" loincloth under his European military style jacket.

Mock violence is rampant in *The Triumph of Mischief*. It is represented in the altercation between the two Indians (fig. 35) belonging to different tribes to the right, possibly over a disagreement caused by one Indian having captured the Greek mythological horse Pegasus. Another Indian on horseback (fig. 34), close to Pan, seems to be in the process of abducting and molesting a Catholic priest, while the Indian (fig. 26) in the dance group around Miss Chief, who stands with his back to the viewer, seems to threaten bloodshed as he is beckoning Picasso with his bloody hands. Moreover, the grizzly bear is adding a measure of aggression to the mix by restraining the leaders of the Corps of Discovery, Lewis and Clark, while the grisaille bears are chasing the two miniature men (fig. 33). Nevertheless, nowhere in the painting is real harm done, reaffirming the assurance given by Duchamp's *Fountain* (fig. 29) and implied in the title of the painting that all events are meant tongue in cheek.

Blasphemy and obscenities are also standard traits defining a carnival scene. If we assume that the Catholic priest (fig. 34) is standing in both for his belief and the Catholic Church, his molestation by the Indian on horseback could be interpreted as an instance of blasphemy, while the three cherubs (fig. 26) poised to crown Miss Chief, the drag queen,

with a flower wreath actually present a better example of it. Although cherubim are found in the Torah and the Old Testament, they clearly evoke images of the Virgin Mary being crowned in a similar fashion. The painting *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* (fig. 40) by Jan van Eyck comes to mind, as well as other Renaissance paintings, such as Titian's *Madonna and Child in Glory* (fig. 41).

It is even possible to read the group of Tlingit dancers as a hidden instance of wickedness (fig. 33). On first sight, the dancers seem to mimic the Indians from Kane's painting *Medicine Mask Dance* (fig. 30). On second sight, however, their white skin is noticeable, which Monkman reserves for the depiction of men of European descent. Hence, it is possible to interpret this side event in *The Triumph of Mischief* as a commentary on white men disrespectfully abusing masks and other regalia, intrinsically connected to ritual and religious aspects of tribal life. Monkman might even reference here that Catlin was known to dress up as an Indian and invite friends to do the same for the tableaux vivants of his *Indian Gallery*.

In some of his other paintings Monkman is actually more sacrilegious. In *Artist and Model* (fig. 10) the tortured photographer is based on the iconographic conventions regarding the Catholic martyr *Saint Sebastian* (fig. 44), who was shot to death by arrows by Roman soldiers. In his painting *Trappers of Men* (fig. 42) an apparition swathed in magenta wraps walks on water in the pose of Christ in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* (fig. 43) in the Sistine Chapel.

Not surprisingly, obscenities are Monkman's forte and are always leavened with humor. In *The Triumph of Mischief* the most visible instance of obscene behavior is found in Pan's visible arousal (fig. 32), which he serenely displays with the typical

ambivalent carnival smile on his face. The frontiersman (fig. 28) to the right who is hurriedly pulling up his pants offers only a suggestion of obscene behavior, as does the detail of the priest, whose habit is pulled up by the Indian who is abducting and possibly molesting him (fig. 34). In addition, the Indian throwing the lasso (fig. 31) sports an overextended loin cloth which also suggests arousal. Just to the right of this scene an Indian (fig. 34) is seen putting flowers into the anus of a white gold seeker who is still in the act of washing his gold pan in the river and appears not quite aware of what is happening to him. This is clearly an appropriation of a similar detail found in the middle panel of Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delight* (figs. 45), where a young man can be observed inserting flowers into another man's anus, thereby possibly referencing sodomy as one of the earthly delights. Since Monkman identifies as a gay man, this visual quote allows him to allude to his sexual orientation without becoming more overly sexually explicit.

In *The Triumph of Mischief* Miss Chief modestly covers her genitals with her birch bark purse, although in Monkman's earlier work, such as in *Heaven and Earth* (fig. 46), *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (fig. 47) and *Artist and Model* (fig. 10), the Indian protagonist is usually explicitly engaged in sexual acts. Many of the other nude participants are either wearing loincloths or are discreetly depicted from the back or the side. Certain juxtapositions in *The Triumph of Mischief*, however, might be interpreted as obscene, such as the highlighted warrior's leg suggestively positioned in front of the rearing centaur (fig. 35), as well as the great number of nude sensuous male bodies in general.

In my investigation of *The Triumph of Mischief* I detect two deviations from the

carnival model. One of them is the absence of grotesque bodies. Monkman's overall sense of bodily aesthetics extends to all male bodies, which are aesthetically pleasing, be they figures from Greek mythology, Native Americans or frontiersmen. Rather, Monkman's preference for showing mostly athletic and well-shaped male nude figures could be interpreted as a celebration of the male body, which would be in accordance with his sexual orientation. Another argument in favor of this theory is that Monkman did not use the broad range of ages typically employed in paintings of carnivalesque scenes, as most of the men seem young, between the ages of twenty and forty, with the one exception being again Picasso, who is represented as an older man. Only one incident could possibly be classified as borderline grotesque, namely the unnatural poses of the three African men (fig. 26). Yet, as they perform the stances of the women in Picasso's *Desmoiselles d'Avignon* (fig. 48) and Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* (fig. 49) respectively, their poses are interpreted as mocking the famous works of art rather than representing instances of the grotesque.

Considering that African men are impersonating Picasso's female figures, I argue that this arrangement could be interpreted as a carnivalesque gender reversal, of which Monkman is rather fond. Miss Chief is herself displaying gender reversal in endless variations in his other work. Yet, more supportive of this theory is the figure of the priest in Monkman's painting *Not the End of the Trail* (fig. 24). His shape and pose are highly reminiscent of two different statues of women. As women are seldom found in paintings of the Western frontier (McMaster 98) and in general did not have a voice in Western cultures until the early twentieth century, it could be possible that Monkman decided to give women retroactively a presence in a place and time period where they were

participating in the settlement of the West. The first one, *Pioneer Woman* (fig. 51) by Leo Friedlander on the campus of Texas Woman's University in Denton, displays the same hand positions as the priest, while the other bronze sculpture, a pioneer women statue in Pioneer Square (fig. 52) in Worland, Wyoming, could have provided the template for the priest's blowing skirts. The supposition that men take over the roles of women in Monkman's paintings makes sense insofar as Monkman's painterly world consists almost entirely of men, where women do not participate as erotic beings. As an underrepresented and long-oppressed minority, however, I argue that Monkman would be inclined to include women in some form in his striving for the empowerment of all formerly silenced groups, be they Indian, black or female.

The second contradiction to carnival expectations is present in that Monkman does not depict gross acts, such as projectile vomiting, enemas and other unpleasant occurrences, which can be found in works by Bosch, such as in the right panel of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* (fig. 45) and Honoré Daumier's *Gargantua* (fig. 53). Male anal intercourse, often considered coarse by the heterosexual population, is not explicitly portrayed. Instead, it is only euphemistically hinted at in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 34) by visually quoting from Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*.

However, Monkman liberally dishes out humiliation, which, according to Bakhtin (256), is an integral part of a carnival. Not only does he target anonymous individuals for shameful poses, such as the gold rush figure, the hurriedly dressing frontiersman and the priest, but especially iconic figures from Western history and art history, apart from Picasso and his artwork. For example, Lewis and Clark (fig. 33), touted by American history as heroes who "discovered" the overland route to the Pacific, are shown being

held captive by an upright standing grizzly bear. Their evident helplessness and ineffectual struggle undermine their claim to positions of authority and power, as even their side-kick Charbonneau is restrained from helping them by his Indian wife Sacagawea. Monkman empowers Sacagawea who is said to have been sold as a slave to her husband (Sacagawea).

Likewise, revered artists are mocked, made fun of or derided, either in person, such as Picasso, or through their work. There is, of course, Bierstadt, whose intentions are effectively undermined by Monkman, and, as mentioned earlier, the four black men who mock Picasso's *Desmoiselles d'Avignon* (Fig. 48), while the carelessly thrown-away pissoir-turned-artwork by Marcel Duchamp (fig. 29) pokes fun at modernism. Catlin's work *Dance to the Berdache* (fig. 54) is turned into a persiflage, as Miss Chief is a self-assured drag queen expressing the opposite mindset of Catlin's humiliated berdache.

Furthermore, the Tlingit Indians (fig. 33) dancing in the foreground mock Kane's representation of a Native ceremonial dance (fig. 30) through their exaggerated poses and query the veracity of his Indian paintings in general by suggesting that the dancers are all white impersonators. Monkman is possibly referring to the "tribe" of European "Indians," white Germans, British, Italian and French people, who are playacting Indian narratives in replicated costumes mostly of the nineteenth century or to white people in North America who are "going native." In *The Triumph of Mischief* these incongruous juxtapositions and alterations generate instant attraction, laughter and confusion which clear the viewer's mind of preformed expectations before the wondering and questioning can start as to what Monkman hoped to achieve with his inversions.

Another important element that Monkman's *The Triumph of Mischief* and

carnivals have in common is the mixing of high and low art, although in Monkman's case the ostensible lightheartedness camouflages poignant and critical statements. Picasso, of course, stands in for his own world-renowned modernist work, while the tallest black person impersonates Michelangelo's work. Both are representing "high art" according to the canon of Western art history. To the realm of so-called "high art" also belong the cherubs (fig. 41) and the diaphanous cloth, indebted to western painting traditions reaching back to the Renaissance. Monkman repeatedly uses the sheer loincloth for Miss Chief. John Berger has pointed out in his book Ways of Seeing that the scant covering, often with diaphanous material, of female bodies such as in Titian's *Perseus and Andromeda* (fig. 55) titillates mostly male viewers, but Monkman mischievously subverts this Western tradition. By attracting attention to the locus of sexuality through partial and sheer covering he reveals and exposes aroused male genitalia instead (fig. 57).

Furthermore, Picasso is holding a "primitive" African mask in his hand, the "low art" source of the "high art" of cubism. On the ground are various other articles displayed which supposedly belong to the "crafts," categorized as lower art forms. All craft objects are of Native origin, such as the birch bark basket, a Plains Indian hide painting and a painted parfleche container, as well as several pottery examples from the Southwest (fig. 59). Also on the ground, though in the corner to the left, is the *Fountain* (fig. 29), an example of "high" art, although Duchamp bought it directly from a plumbing supply business (Fountain). Monkman uses these juxtapositions strategically to critique the situation found in many museums, where Indian objects and Indian art are either relegated to ethnological collections, where they are treated as artifacts and crafts and not as art, or, inversely, where objects, which were not intended as art but for use during

rituals, are taken out of context and declared to be “art.” Picasso, who is holding an African mask in his hand, is symbolically referencing the same situation regarding African art.

Monkman’s critique of Western prejudices regarding the artistic products of non-western cultures is also evident in the bowl of fruit sitting on the ground next to the hide painting. First of all, it challenges the viewer to set Native art equal to the symbol of Western art, namely the classic still life composition with exotic fruit (fig. 59). Yet, strangely enough, in this case, the fruit, such as apples, pears and grapes, are exotic only for the “ignorant and primitive” Indian, which gently hints at the fact that Monkman is satirizing the supposed viewpoint of the “savage,” who is not familiar with European fruit.

A last comparison between *The Triumph of Mischief* and carnivals in general focuses on the use of masks. Masks are typically worn in Mardi Gras celebrations or other pre-Lent carnivals to allow the wearers to change their identities, including their gender. In Monkman’s painting, however, the masks appropriated from Kane’s painting are actual ritual masks (fig. 30), sacred objects in Native cultures held in high esteem by the community. I wonder whether Monkman intentionally chose masks (fig. 33) from the Northwest Coast Tlingit people to allude to the infamous case of the Kiks’adi Frog Clan Crest Hat of the Sitka clan (fig. 58) which, after a long debacle, is in the possession of the Alaska State Museum but can be used by the Sitka clan for ceremonies (Jones 257-258). The hat was a showcase of how ethnologists unlawfully gained possession of important ritual objects, which caused in this case very serious repercussions for the person who sold it and also for the bereaved and betrayed community. As ritual objects, and



especially masks, have been avidly sought by anthropologists and art collectors for their aesthetic value, the Northwest Coast masks lend a sobering aspect to the otherwise overall lighthearted playfulness in *The Triumph of Mischief*. Clearly, Monkman's intentions behind the use of carnivalesque elements are revealed in each instance. In addition to the entertainment value for the viewer, they reference Western ideologies, imperial history, as well as the sins committed by early ethnologists and anthropologists.

## Chapter 5

### Gender Roles, Stereotypes, Minorities and the Catholic Church

“The history and customs of such people, preserved by pictorial illustrations, are themes worthy of the lifetime of one artist, and nothing short of the loss of my life, shall prevent me from knowing them and becoming their historian. From what I have seen so far of these people I feel authorized to say, that there is nothing very strange or unaccountable in their character; but that it is a simple one, and easy to be learned and understood, if the right means be taken to familiarize ourselves with it” (*The Triumph of Mischief* installation 15).

The glamorous drag queen Miss Chief is the main protagonist in Monkman’s work. Her name is, of course, a pun on the mischievous role she plays in Monkman’s art in addition to hinting that she wants to be seen as a female Native chief. Although a drag queen does not fit any stereotypical notions regarding chiefs of any kind, it alludes to the fact that Native women were often awarded high social status in their traditional communities in the past and again in the present time. The most recent famous female Native chief was Cherokee Chief Wilma Mankiller.

One of Miss Chief’s functions is to re-introduce the third gender, which had been largely lost and supplanted by the binary gender system rooted in European cultures and forced onto Native groups during colonial times through Christian conversions and teachings. Through her actions Miss Chief is the instigator of social and historical critique in a host of different situations, while receiving the viewer’s attention not the least by dint of her homoerotic poses and actions.

In most cases Miss Chief is shown almost completely nude, except in three chromogenic prints from the series *Miss Chief: The Emergence of a Legend* (figs. 12, 15), where she is possibly parodying figures from early films about Native cultures or from Catlin’s living exhibits (McIntosh 37). Characteristically, she is wearing clothing

elements of both male and female gender (figs. 57, 59). A whirling diaphanous shawl or loincloth, borrowed from Renaissance paintings and often sporting the contemporary “girlish” color magenta, constitutes Miss Chief’s hallmark. To balance the culturally loaded shawl, she usually wears a Plains Indian war bonnet with long trailing ends and feminine high-heeled footwear. In *The Impending Storm* and *The Triumph of Mischief* we observe her wearing wooden slippers with high heels, which are beaded at the sides with Plains Indian designs. In cases where Miss Chief is taking her purse along, like in *The Triumph of Mischief*, we perceive that it is made of birch bark, suggestive of articles made by Native culture groups living near the Great Lakes. However, as she is tuned in to contemporary fashion, the purse sports a contemporary Louis Vuitton design. The latter seems to be her favorite, as we recognize it on her birch bark luggage, as well as on the arrow quiver (fig. 18) deposited in Miss Chief’s *Boudoir de Berdache* (fig. 74) and recognizable in *Artist and Model* (fig. 10) as well.

Although Miss Chief is a sexually charged person and in many paintings engaged in homosexually suggestive behavior such as in *The Impending Storm* (fig. 57) and *Artist and Model* (fig. 10), the male Indian in earlier paintings, such as *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* (fig. 47) and *Heaven and Earth* (fig. 46) is involved in explicit and graphic homosexual acts. Miss Chief, however, despite her aura of sexuality and the presence of numerous feminine paraphernalia, is far removed from ever displaying stereotypical female behavior, such as sentimental seduction or feminine submission, fawning or flirting. On the contrary, her attitude and stance invariably radiate pride and power. No smile softens her face; she is always acting deliberately and from within her own agenda, whether she is meeting a priest (fig. 50) or approaching Picasso (fig. 59). It seems evident that she

derives this self-determining mindset from feeling completely confident about her gender, her identity and her ethnicity. She effectively harnesses her self-assurance to reclaim the sexual freedom and acceptance of a third gender formerly embedded in Native cultures, thereby enlightening both white and Native American viewers about the past and the present circumstances of queer Native American people.

Currently “two-spirit people” is the term used to describe Native Americans who are simultaneously carrying the male and the female spirit. Usually referencing homosexual men, one particular type of two-spirit people, called “berdaches,” are documented in many tribes from all over North America (Norton 4); they used to inhabit positions of respect, such as playing the social key roles of healers, shamans and visionaries. They were believed to be able to cross gender boundaries and create unity in indigenous societies, while also being able to cross the boundaries between the human and the spirit world (Williams 73, 78). In many North American tribes, both girls and boys could choose their gender in accordance with their proclivity towards male or female areas of interest (Norton 20). Evidence of a broader spectrum of gender in Native cultures, however, has been elided and suppressed from Western narratives by Western governments and Christian denominations, which tended to demonize homosexuality and other “sexual deviations” (Williams 73). This consequently led to many Native American groups adopting a hostile stance towards alternative genders expressed in their cultures. The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission is currently actively engaged in decolonizing Native cultures by reclaiming the traditional positions of third gender people in order to alleviate the harsh realities and debilitating

ostracism faced by gay and lesbian aboriginal people from their own culture groups, including the denial of mental and physical care (Deschamps 1-15).

In *The Triumph of Mischief* Miss Chief is seen striding like a queen into a boisterous group of Native American men (fig. 59), most of whom are wearing elaborate face and body paint very similar to the decorations of certain warriors painted by Catlin (figs. 60). The men are engaged in a dance with Miss Chief in the center. However, dancing among them is one white man (fig. 27). He is fully dressed in jeans and sweater and sports red hair, which perhaps indicates that this is a self-portrait of Monkman as his Irish self. As he is half Cree he is participating in a Native ritual. Unobtrusively positioned behind him we see a white buffalo calf calmly looking on, offering the viewer a second clue regarding the identity of the white dancer. Among the Sioux a white buffalo calf is regarded a sacred animal. If a young man received a vision of a white buffalo calf during his vision quest, it was interpreted as a sign that the gods bestowed onto him the special status of a homosexual person (Williams 79). Consequently, the buffalo calf could be an indication that the white dancer is truly a self-portrait of Monkman himself.

Furthermore, the entire group of Native dancers appears to mimic Catlin's painting *Dance to the Berdache* (fig. 54) with Miss Chief acting as the berdache standing in the middle of the dance circle. Monkman references Catlin's work many times in order to disprove claims that Catlin created authentic representations of Native Americans. Catlin painted only masculine heterosexual men and deliberately avoided introducing a gender spectrum into his paintings, even though he experienced the presence of a third gender. His homophobic attitude is reflected in his writings where he refers to men who

do not fit the warrior stereotype as “beaus, dandies, faint hearts, old women, gay bucks, [and] fops” (McIntosh 42). Catlin’s strategy of ridicule, minimizing and banalization is, according to Trouillot, an effective tool to relegate a hitherto accepted group of men to silence (97). In Catlin’s painting *Dance to the Berdache* (fig. 54) a man dressed like a woman stands apparently ashamed in the circle of men who seem to taunt her. Shirley Madill claims that “men are teasing the berdache, vying for recognition, which is deemed an honour in their culture” (25), yet a slightly different interpretation of this dance is given by social and literary historian Rictor Norton, who claims that the men are publicly expressing their sexual relationship with the berdache (3). In order to further get back at Catlin for ridiculing queers, Monkman even inserts half of Catlin’s double portrait of the Assiniboine warrior Wi-jun-jon Pigeon’s Egg Head (fig. 61) next to the frontiersmen in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 28). In a dandy-like stance he is seen dressed in Western military garb holding feminine Western accoutrements, such as a fan and an umbrella in his hands. Pigeon’s Egg Head is staring straight at a good-looking, blond, young man in front of him, who is either checking his own appearance in a hand-held mirror or returning Pigeon’s Egg Head’s gaze. The sexually loaded tension between the two men is relayed via the reflection in the hand mirror.

Arousal and aggressive sexual activity are often displayed in Greek art both by humans and mythological figures. In *The Triumph of Mischief* Pan (fig. 32) can be observed gleefully gliding through the melee of Monkman’s painting with his hairy goat legs, fully aroused and his panpipe in his hand. By intermixing Native American men with real or mythological men from ancient Mediterranean cultures, where homosexuality was normalized and accepted, Monkman underscores his conviction that

homosexuality can be found in every culture, Native or Western, ancient or contemporary, military or mythological.

To expand on this belief that homosexual desire is integral to any culture, Monkman also undermines stereotypes of the brawny, masculine and heterosexual cowboy, trapper and frontiersman. The frontiersman on the far right of *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 28), who is struggling to put his pants back on after what in this situation can only be a homosexual encounter, might be a case in point. Although he appears attracted to homosexual opportunities, he is trying to hide his inclinations. Cowboys are another subgroup targeted by Monkman to be visually outed in his earlier paintings *Ceci n'est past une pipe* (fig. 47), *Heaven and Earth* (fig. 46), *The Rape of Daniel Boone Junior* (fig. 9) and *Portrait of the Artist as Hunter* (fig. 11). According to Madill, homosexual tendencies were also found in male-only subgroups such as soldiers (28), who Monkman includes in his list of Miss Chief's sexual conquests in his painting *Rebellion* (fig. 62).

Even more often, though, Monkman is indicting members of the Catholic Church of bigotry, as they had been hiding, glossing over and denying the homosexual behavior of many members of the clergy for centuries, while stridently emphasizing heterosexual relationships and marriage for the general public. Monkman might also be referencing the troubles of the Catholic Church during the early part of the twenty-first century, when the Church stood accused of covering up and protecting abusive pedophile priests. In many of his paintings Monkman shows priests as being suggestively invited to homosexual activities, seduced, or molested by gay Indians, such as in *The Big Basket Seller* (fig. 63).

The theme of gay men hiding their sexual orientation by joining the clergy,

however, is the focal point of Monkman's painting *Not the End of the Trail* (fig. 24) where we see Miss Chief on horseback meeting a priest in the foreground of Bierstadt's mellow and serene evening landscape *Yosemite Valley* (fig. 19). Miss Chief uses body language to communicate her sexual offer. She turns her bare bottom suggestively towards the priest, a stance that is mirrored by the horse pointing its own bottom in the same direction, although not as invitingly. This double invitation creates a humorous nuance, even naughtily referencing sodomy. The light on Miss Chief makes her flesh tones stand out against the darker ground, while the darkness around the priest could be read as an expression of the doubt and turmoil in his mind or, alternately, as his need to hide his forbidden attraction. Furthermore, the shape and pose of the priest express an ambivalent response to Miss Chief. His billowing skirts seem to be reaching out toward her and visually suggest that he is attracted to her against his will. Another interesting detail is the priest's right hand which is lifted and clutching his crucifix hanging around his neck. Is he trying to hide his interest in Miss Chief or ward off her "evil" offer? Or is he trying to disguise Norton's sign of homosexuals, the "flutter of the fingers" (6)?

In a double critique that boggles the mind Monkman is using the priest in *Not the End of the Trail* (fig. 50) as a representative of a minority, as well as a person in a position of power, as the priest is Native with darker skin color and two dark braids. How is this double inversion supposed to be read? According to Gerald McMaster, a Native American art historian, whose article "The Geography of Hope" is included in the catalog for *The Triumph of Mischief* installation, this means that the Native priest has made a decision for education and assimilation. Joining the clergy during the time of forced assimilation from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century was



the only way for Native Americans to obtain a higher education. In this context, McMaster interprets the priest's stance as questioning the Indian warrior regarding his decision (97, 98).

Yet another stereotype is inverted in this painting. The expected power relationship between priest and Indian, with the first inhabiting a higher social status than the second, is upset in numerous ways. Miss Chief is elevated by being seated on a horse of which she is in full control, while the priest is standing on the ground with his bible left discarded in the grass as if he has been distracted. Furthermore, Miss Chief is bathed in sunlight, while the priest is standing in the shade. While she is taking action, he is left considering how to react. In every respect Miss Chief radiates power and self-determination, while the priest seems to be weak and easy to manipulate.

In relation to Native art one often encounters the prejudice that it is supposedly primitive, as the artists are assumed to be incapable of applying Western conventions regarding perspective and modeling. Monkman offers a visual persiflage of this particular stereotype, especially in *Artist and Model* (fig. 10), where Miss Chief is making a portrait of the tortured photographer on a sheet of birch bark affixed to a Western easel. In addition she translates the portrait into a ridiculous stick figure rendition while striking the stereotypical Western pose of the artist genius. As Monkman repeatedly references and/or applies classical painting styles of Western landscape and history paintings, including perspective and modeling strategies, his virtuosity in painting sets straight the persistent assumption that Native Americans are only capable of creating crafts. Inspected more closely, Monkman deflates in particular the myth that primitive cultures- and Native American people are usually thrown into that category-are able to only

reference nature in a rather abstract way (Ash-Milby 17, 22). Monkman, however, by showing great passion for landscape painting, a genre shaped by distinctly European painting conventions, proves these prejudices to be wrong.

As Monkman is extremely knowledgeable in regards to Western art history it comes as no surprise that he even inverts subtle stereotypes found in landscape painting conventions of the nineteenth century. Since westward expansion naturally moves from the East to the West, this directional connotation found its way into other landscape paintings, too, such as *The Oxbow* (fig. 64) by Thomas Cole. The good weather advances from the East, while the bad weather appears to linger in the western, less developed part of the landscape. I believe that Monkman used this concept deliberately in *Impending Storm* (fig. 56). However, the bad weather is approaching from the East, possibly announcing the arrival of Western civilization, which will attack Native cultures and their attendant gender structures. Miss Chief and her white lover are running away, clinging to the receding Native cultures where same-sex love is still legitimate, while the dark approaching cloud of colonization will undoubtedly condemn their love and hurt them.

In a different way Monkman integrates and celebrates the work of artists who are rumored to have been gay (Dennen), such as the already mentioned *Dying Slave* (fig. 49) by Michelangelo, but also the figure of Romulus which he copied from David's *Intervention of the Sabine Women* (fig. 65). We can recognize the proud stance of the Roman warrior in the figure of the drum pounding Indian who wears the metal helmet. Although David's painting was "rendered scandalously 'sodomitic' to its early-nineteenth-century bourgeois audience" (Padiyar 5), the male nude also stood for the concept of autonomy and freedom, a highly valued philosophical principle to David.

Even though David celebrated the ideal male nude body repeatedly in his oeuvre, art historian Satish Padiyar claims that David was actually heterosexual (85).

Many stereotypes regarding Native Americans stem from the endless repetitions of certain binary oppositions in Hollywood Western movies, which depict common social values and beliefs (Wright 121), while preventing the questioning of accepted social structures. According to sociologist Will Wright a typical Western movie is built on four binary oppositions. They are the dualities of good versus bad, strong versus weak, inside society versus outside society, and wilderness versus civilization. Like many Hollywood Westerns, *The Triumph of Mischief* is based on encounters between whites and Indians, albeit with sexual overtones and gay actors, where the four contrasting dichotomies play out clearly on various levels.

One stereotypical depiction of civilization is the clothed human being who stands in contrast to the naked savage living in the wilderness; in Monkman's painting, however, the clothed man is only found at the peripheries. On the far left side of the painting we see Lewis and Clark in their early nineteenth-century attire (fig. 33). Both are held in a restraining embrace by an upright grizzly bear, which represents the "Wild West." French-Canadian fur trapper Toussaint Charbonneau who is coming to the rescue, on the other hand, is only partly dressed. This befits his particular situation, as he is straddling the divide between belonging to Western civilization as a white man and being at home in the wilderness. His split cultural identity is further emphasized by his Shoshone wife Sacagawea, who is forcefully holding him back from interfering. Sacagawea, although fully dressed and thereby refuting the concept that Indians are half-naked savages, belongs clearly to the wilderness and the uncivilized "other," as shown in

her deer hide dress and leggings and her child strapped to an embroidered cradle board.

The Catholic priest's dress constitutes a symbol of high status in Western society. In *The Triumph of Mischief* both his dress and his status are being violated possibly as a prelude to other atrocities (fig. 34). Another usually dressed but now ignominiously bared defender of Western culture and a likely representation of the white man's greed, the kneeling gold seeker to the right of the priest, has to succumb to being sodomized by an Indian who is sticking flowers in his anus. His pulled-down pants are clearly making fun of and degrading his so-called civilized status.

Other dressed men are found on the far right side of the painting (fig. 28). One is shown pulling up his pants which takes away some of his status as a properly dressed, enlightened man, while the man next to him, completely dressed in a western military outfit, is Catlin's warrior Pigeon's Egg Head. The Assiniboiné warrior received his Western outfit after he visited Washington as part of an Indian delegation (Troccoli 202) (fig. 61). If civilization could truly be measured in degrees of dress, then Catlin's Indian represents one of the most cultured individuals present in Monkman's painting, equal to Lewis and Clark.

The upright blond man next to Pigeon Egg's Head (fig. 28) is wearing the outfit of the frontiersman who has adopted superior dress from the Indians, such as leather footwear and a fringed hide dress. Only his collar and his knit leggings seem to be European style. Monkman's Irish self (fig. 27), dancing in the circle around Miss Chief, is also fully clothed, but he clearly sides with the Natives. In conclusion, the degree of dress in this painting follows the stereotypes regarding cultural evolution, yet with overturned power differentials.

The inverted stereotype regarding dress is also found in other works by Monkman. In *The Impending Storm* (fig. 56) Miss Chief's white male lover is dressed like a frontiersman in jeans, albeit unbuttoned (fig. 57). Yet, as his upper body is naked and he does not sport any foot wear, he fits more into the stereotype of the Indian "savage" than that of the frontiersman, who is usually shown as a vigorous, manly guy, fully dressed and wearing boots. This frontiersman, however, is looking lovingly at Miss Chief, granting more power and agency to his Indian male partner. The white lover comes across as a follower, which again subverts the traditional power roles expected in paintings of the West, where white men are typically shown as superior.

Overall, Monkman is inverting the myth of equating civilization and power with clothing as dressed males of European descent are invariably found in compromising positions or robbed of agency and power. Furthermore, in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 2) the Greek mythological beings and "real" men, although touted as belonging to one of the most sophisticated and refined societies, are depicted as completely naked. This surprising juxtaposition sets both cultures equal and could be interpreted either way, declaring both either "civilized" or "savage."

The binary pair of strong versus weak is found correspondingly in the dichotomy of clothed/naked men, although contrary to traditional expectations. The dressed white figures all find themselves in positions of vulnerability, weakness or an inability to defend themselves, while the Native Americans and Greek men are depicted as free agents, young and powerful, and in many cases as forcefully dominating the white men.

The dichotomies of good and bad as well as insider versus outsider are similarly turned upside down. Picasso, an iconic figure inside Western civilization, finds himself in

the position of accused villain and outsider in Miss Chief's mixed society, while Miss Chief, who as drag queen is expected to belong to the fringes of society, wields not only power over him, but is clearly the leader of at least all Native American participants (fig. 59). Moreover, the priest who is typically regarded as a pillar of society in civilized cultures is presented by Monkman as symbolizing hypocrisy and being excluded from society in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 34), *Not the End of the Trail* (fig. 24) and *The Big Basket Seller* (fig. 63). At the same time he is vilified as an active participant in the suppression of indigenous beliefs while simultaneously disseminating a value system that demonized homosexuality.

Other figures usually understood as belonging outside mainstream society, such as Native Americans, African Americans and gay men especially, create a setting where they comprise the dominant society. The few heterosexuals, such as Lewis, Clark and Charbonneau, find themselves literally on the outside of the dominant group and their freedom heavily infringed. The two white, dressed frontiersmen on the right, however, while they are usually relegated to the outside fringes of society due to their profession, appear to inhabit a liminal space, due probably to the circumstance that they seem to be gay and that they have adopted certain features of Native American cultures.

In summary, Monkman repeatedly addresses issues regarding gender roles, stereotypes derived from literary or visual sources, and other minorities, such as African-Americans and women. Catholic priests are one of his targets, as are saints and iconic Catholic art. By consistently inverting the roles and/or expectations, Monkman provides the foundation of the pervasive sense of humor found in *The Triumph of Mischief*.

## 6. Postmodern and Postcolonial Strategies

“Although their character has its dark spots, there is much to recommend it to the admiration of the enlightened world. I trust that the audience, who looks at my works with care, will be disposed to join me in the conclusion that the European Male is an honest, hospitable, faithful, brave, warlike, cruel, revengeful, relentless-yet honourable, contemplative and religious being” (*The Triumph of Mischief* installation 15).

As I discussed earlier, the carnival theme is the most prominent organizational concept of Monkman’s *The Triumph of Mischief*, yet the inherent critique of Western epistemology and civilization is closely followed and deepened on a smaller scale by details emerging from postmodernist and postcolonial discourses. Postmodernism is often understood as a reaction to modernist art, after it changed its status from avant-garde to an established classic art form (Williams R. 231). This statement is embedded in *The Triumph of Mischief* as Picasso is the representative of modernism, who is inserted into a painting which is constructed following postmodern tactics. According to British sociologist and media theorist Richard Hebdige, postmodernism is based on three negations. It is against “all those pre-Post-erous discourses which are associated with either the Enlightenment or the Western philosophical tradition...to define an essential human nature, to prescribe a global human density or to prescribe collective human goals” (Hebdige 374-375). As a result, the distinction between high and low culture is abandoned, as well as all other universalist meta-narratives such as Christianity, scientific progress and cultural evolution theory.

Critique of the latter is the overarching issue central to *The Triumph of Mischief*. In 1877 the model of cultural evolution was developed by anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan, who introduced the concept of three consecutive levels of cultural development resulting in the categories of savagery, barbarianism and civilization. The theory was

entirely ethnocentric. Western culture was considered to be at the very top of possible cultural developments, while all other societies ranked below it. Not surprisingly, this model had enduring and destructive effects on Native populations around the world. It insidiously informed Western epistemologies regarding culture groups encountered during colonial times and, to this day, is responsible for incidences of racism not readily visible on the surface of society (Lipsitz 6-7). Postmodernism and postcolonialism allow viewpoints from within the dominated cultures and encourage an investigation into the validity of knowledge acquired “under the gaze of Western imperialism and Western science” (Smith 39). Monkman is inverting the very system on which imperial epistemologies are founded. In his art he attacks the classification of cultures based on a rigid and ethnocentric set of standards for comparing any foreign culture against the colonial society, as well as the imperial structures underlying the visual representations of those groups (Smith 42-43).

Hebdige also points out that postmodernism distances itself from all sweeping ideologies and programmatic concepts, such as “the perfect state of being” and the “end of all (oppressive) powers” (379). Even the sublime is interpreted as being a “metaphor of the absolute,” according to Lyotard (381), as it does not create a community, but instead breaks it up. Each individual in a sublime setting is confronted with a feeling of vulnerability, loneliness and insignificance in the grand scheme of things (Hebdige 381). Racial identity, the exploration of difference, as well as the investigation into the construction of gender, become focal points in postmodernist work (Williams R. 264-5), while a medley of non-original work is quoted as a hypertext, creating, according to Barthes, ““a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them



original, blend and clash’” (Williams R. 273).

By introducing Native narratives into Western landscape paintings by Bierstadt and Cole, Monkman gives the land back to Native people and sets the historical record straight; he summarizes his strategy as follows: “If land is considered to be property, the original paintings are intellectual property. ...Through my painstaking theft of these landscapes I invade the colonial imagination, dismantling and subverting the found vision of ‘The West’ from within” (Ash-Milby 20).

Furthermore, his act of re-appropriation gives Native people not only a voice, but also a far-reaching past which is equivalent to the timeline found in Western societies, together with a worldview that demands respect and attention. Monkman reminds us that, before Columbus and the Mayflower, Native people were the original inhabitants of North America and have continued to be vital agents in the development of the continent to the present.

Monkman’s statement stakes out his position in another monumental task, namely to set straight the deeply ingrained stereotypical belief regarding the imminent demise of Native American cultures underlying the work of Catlin and Kane. Echoing Catlin’s thoughts sixty-six years later, President Theodore Roosevelt wrote in his foreword to Edward S. Curtis’ encyclopedia The North American Indian:

“The Indian as he has hitherto been is on the point of passing away. His life has been lived under conditions thru which our own race past so many ages ago that not a vestige of their memory remains. It would be a veritable calamity if a vivid and truthful record of these conditions

were not kept” (Adam 26-27).

This example gives evidence of the persistent belief in the concept of the “vanishing race,” which was perpetuated and naturalized not only in written documents, but also through the influences of iconic paintings, prints and sculptures. It is most poignantly visualized in the bronze sculpture called *The End of the Trail* (fig. 25) by James Earle Fraser, originally created for the Panama/Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915 (Fraser) and now displayed in the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. The image of Fraser’s defeated Indian with his sagging posture seated on a starving horse pushed into oblivion by a howling wind is found to this day as souvenirs throughout the West. It is reproduced as posters and metal cut-outs, and sold as replicas of the original sculpture in all sizes and materials (figs. 68, 69, 70).

Since its first exhibition *The End of the Trail* has irritated and inflamed Native Americans. The popular sculpture visually cemented and naturalized the claim that the Indians had disappeared. It thereby denied indigenous people their very existence in contemporary society, as well as the acknowledgement of the continuance and viability of their cultures and the truth that they survived genocide. The myth’s lasting influence ranges from overt racial discrimination to more covert instances of spatial racism, where there is less access to services, job opportunities, networking, healthcare and subsidies. In the case of many Native Americans this is often due to the isolation of many reservations (Lipsitz 5-7).

Monkman’s Indians, however, demonstrate that they did not only fail to vanish, but that they are actually the ethnic majority in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 2) and many of his other works. Furthermore, they are shown invariably in positions of power,

often with sexual overtones, and they are always young, healthy and beautiful men. Not surprisingly, most of them seem to be gay, too. Miss Chief, the main protagonist in Monkman's oeuvre, possesses all these qualities to a high degree. She is a drag queen, young and attractive, fashionable and sexy. She exudes power, intelligence and a well-mapped agenda. The clearest instance of Monkman refuting the concept of the "vanishing race" can be found, however, in his painting *Not the End of the Trail* (fig. 24), where he literally inserts Fraser's iconic sculpture. Although we recognize the figures and the stances Miss Chief is sitting on a well-nourished horse, in full command of the situation and the center of erotic interest. There is no trace of defeat or submission.

In addition to undermining the myth of the imminent demise of Native culture, Monkman is also fighting stereotypes that are older and even more deeply ingrained in Western thought, epistemology and visual conventions. In a detail of *The Triumph of Mischief* he targets one of the oldest fears connected with the Native inhabitants of the Americas since Columbus landed in the Bahamas, namely the savage and his barbarian habit of cannibalism. In the circle of supposedly sadistic and bloodthirsty dancing Indians (fig. 59) one Native is stretching out his "bloody" hands to possibly lay them on an apprehensive Picasso; yet with a second look, the viewer becomes aware of the bowl with barbecued ribs at the warrior's feet and realizes that the ribs are too large to be human. Therefore the "blood" most likely consists only of reddish barbeque sauce and is not an indication that Picasso will fall into the hands of barbarian cannibals.

The topic of cannibalism was partially embedded in many engraved images from the sixteenth century that helped establish lasting stereotypical beliefs regarding Native Americans by naturalizing an iconography based on prejudices and misinformation. One

of the most widely disseminated images was the iconic print *America* from the book *Nova Reperta* (fig. 74), dating from 1584. It shows the explorer Amerigo Vespucci discovering America, symbolized as a naked female figure who has been called and awakened by Vespucci (Gaudio xi-xiv). The reclined female figure confronting a dressed upright man includes already a host of suppositions, for example lower intelligence, emphasis on the senses instead of the mind, as well as a slovenly and backwards life style. A sloth behind her signifies laziness, while the actions around a fire in the background implies a cannibalistic ritual. When absorbed together, America is seen in a negative light, sensual and belonging to the weaker sex, while the conqueror stands in a position of power and advanced knowledge. After all, he is a representative of a higher civilization which did away with barbaric acts such as cannibalism a long time ago (Gaudio xv).

Furthermore, Vespucci is depicted in possession of various metallic objects which set civilization apart from the lower cultural stages of savagery and barbarism. He is wearing iron armor and holds in his hand an astrolabe, an instrument of science based on technology, both deemed markers of the highest level achievable in the evolutionary system of cultures (Gaudio xviii). Since metal is a signifier for civilization, I believe that Monkman lets his drum-beating warrior (fig. 27) wear a Spanish metal helmet to reference on the one hand the earliest imperial conquests in the New World, while ridiculing the significance attached by Europeans to the use of incised or wrought metal. The blank metal used by Native Americans for ornamentation was of no practical use and therefore wasteful especially in the eyes of Protestant Europeans (Gaudio xiii-xvii).

Yet the juxtaposition of the savage and civilized states is ambiguously represented in *The Triumph of Mischief*, both in regards to details and overarching themes.

Referencing once more the detail of the Hispanic metal helmet perched on top of the head of a Native American, it insinuates darker possibilities in addition to mocking the supposed superior European civilization, namely that this trophy was possibly won during massacres and warfare.

Monkman utilizes one other detail deliberately and repeatedly to undermine the concept of a hierarchical order of culture, which automatically assumes Western civilization to be the pinnacle any civilization can achieve. It is the stylish Louis Vuitton design, consisting of the initials LV and three simple flower shapes in primary and secondary colors on a white background. It is printed on Miss Chief's suitcases inside the *Boudoir de Berdache* (fig. 73) and her arrow quiver (fig. 18), which is also present in his painting *Artist and Model* (fig. 10) and the print *Hunter* (fig. 16). Not only does the pattern prove Miss Chief's sense of fashion, but its elements create multiple layers of meaning. The initials might indicate that Miss Chief, reigning in the nineteenth century, is literate, thereby putting to rest another supposed indication of her lower cultural level. However, the flower shapes are strongly reminiscent of Native American beadwork. For example, the stylized flower motif on the quiver resembles the design on top of a Kiowa cradle board (fig. 66), while the negative flower inside a circle resembles the central shape inside multiple nested circles on an Innu shaman's robe (fig. 67).

This finding supports the theory that Monkman might have intended the Vuitton motif to suggest that contemporary Western design is actually indebted to traditional Native American patterns. This supposition gains more credibility when applied to

Monkman's *Hunter* (fig. 16). Here Miss Chief has the quiver draped over her shoulder, so that it rests next to the body paint on her upper left arm. The quadrilateral arrangement inside a circle on her arm is very similar to Vuitton's flower design. While Monkman might offer these similarities as proof of a self-serving appropriation of Native culture, he seems at the same time to enjoy showing that contemporary Indians are hip and completely at home in the Western fashion world.

In addition, the Vuitton design decorates Western and Native objects alike, and is sometimes printed on indigenous materials such as birch bark. This might be understood as a hidden commentary by Monkman on the confusing definitions of both postmodernism and fashion. According to cultural studies scholar Elizabeth Wilson, who positions fashion in the oscillating interpretation of postmodernism, one of the defining elements of postmodernism is: "the compulsory confusion of contemporary modes...[as] all sense of development and history are lost, so that the jumble of stylistic mannerism becomes as 'schizophrenic' as the consumer culture that spawns them" (392-93). Nonetheless, through the evidence of elements of nostalgia, provoked by the use of birch bark, these incongruous combinations first arouse the response of laughter, closely followed by the awareness that they are at the same time subtle signs of protest against the status quo (Wilson 395).

More apparent than the use of small details to subvert the pernicious concept of an evolutionary cultural scale is the inclusion of Greek fabled creatures and Greek warrior/athletes in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 2). The Native American warriors surrounding Miss Chief are mostly naked, which might be read as a sign of their lower status as "savages" on the cultural development scale, although some of them are wearing

loincloths. However, they are juxtaposed by and at times interacting with completely naked mythological figures from Ancient Greece (fig. 32). Ironically, in Ancient Greece, nudity was seen as a way to celebrate the beauty of the ideal human body, which in turn was valued as the highest refinement of civilization. By rendering both Native “savages” and Greek gods/warriors as equal and intermingling nude white and brown bodies, Monkman, mischievously and ingeniously, is setting Native American culture equal to the highest ideal of Western civilization, namely that of Ancient Greece. He is thereby pointing out the inherent inconsistencies entrenched in the tenets of Western civilization, which elevate the celebrated nudes from the dominant culture while simultaneously denigrating the ones of the non-dominant groups. In this context it is interesting to point out that the same double standard is reflected in the use of the English words “naked” and “nude.” The first one is seen as an indication of primitivism with possible sexual implications, whereas the second one is supposedly devoid of sexual connotations and is used to emphasize the aesthetic aspect of the human body.

Furthermore, the representatives of Ancient Greek culture also stand for the social acceptance of a variety of sexual behavior, which is visually portrayed on many Greek painted vessels (fig. 71). Monkman again reveals similarities between ancient Mediterranean cultures, where homosexuality was normalized and accepted and Native American cultures.

Yet cultural and gender discrimination can be found as well in the field of art and art history. Monkman questions and critiques the canon of Western art history by quoting and distorting existing art, such as the already discussed landscapes from the nineteenth century where he subverts the sublime through the inclusion of sexual innuendos. He

mocks Kane's painting of Tlingit Indians (fig. 30) by changing the dancers' postures and skin color while inserting them into an irreverent carnival (fig. 33). The meaning of Catlin's *The Dance to the Berdache* (fig. 54) has been turned inside out by Miss Chief's proud stance, while the same was achieved in regards to Fraser's *End of the Trail* (fig. 25). In many details, such as the cherubs with the flower wreath flying around Miss Chief in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 59) and the diaphanous loincloths whirling artfully around her in *Not the End of the Trail* (fig. 50) and in *The Impending Storm* (fig. 57) as well, Monkman quotes from the Renaissance, the perceived pinnacle of Western art.

Contradictions in style, era and culture can be found both in small details of *The Triumph of Mischief*, such as the Vuitton pattern on a Native American quiver and Duchamp's *Fountain* in a Bierstadt landscape, and in large-scale disparities ranging from Indians encountering Greek mythological beings to a male Indian leader in drag outfit which combines Renaissance, Native American and contemporary elements. The effect of all parts taken as a whole can be described as "a field of tension between tradition and innovation, conservation and renewal, mass culture and high art....a field of tension which can no longer be grasped in categories such as progress vs. reaction, left vs. right, present vs. past, modernism vs. realism, abstraction vs. representation, [or] avant-garde vs. kitsch" (Wilson 399). Although Monkman mixes and combines the most unlikely components in *The Triumph of Mischief*, the postmodern viewer, nevertheless, is able to assimilate the incongruous pieces into a new, unified, postmodern whole, which forces him to question myriad established stereotypes, narrative and epistemologies.



## Chapter 7

### Conclusion: Power Games

After investigating Monkman's strategies the multi-layered results of his subversive efforts and goals become apparent. Whether we are looking at the myth of the empty West or the myth that colonized cultures are different from the colonizing ones and therefore must be inferior to Western societies, the issue boils down to the question of who is in the position of power. Throughout his work and especially in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 2) the balance of power has shifted away from the expected, historically supported positions to those belonging to the oppressed, the underdog, the silenced group, culture, gender or individual.

Although the emblematic warrior of Monkman's earlier work, re-incarnated as Miss Chief, is a member of the subjugated populace, he/she is always represented as proud, focused, and independent, and so are the other Indians of the fantastic brotherhood. Miss Chief's drag accoutrements set her apart from the young male and intrinsically heterosexual stereotypical Indian. Although she is wearing her Plains Indians war bonnet most of the time, she appears without any warrior attributes in *The Triumph of Mischief* (fig. 59). Through her position and pose she still exudes superiority over any white opponent, be it Picasso, cowboys or other white men. In all of Monkman's paintings she is more powerful than any representative of the European culture, thereby inverting the anticipated power relationship handed down from colonial times, namely that positions in power are as a rule filled by white heterosexual men.

Similarly, Catholic priests are thought to enjoy a higher level of respect as members of the clergy. As educated men, they are supposedly dedicated to a life of moral

superiority and spirituality. Monkman, however, implicates them over and over in sexually charged situations, alluding to the fact that they are often gay and very susceptible to homosexual seduction. In the process they are revealed as hypocrites and weak men.

Fraser, Catlin, Kane and other white artists have depicted Indians for over a century as the vanishing race, defeated, stuck in time, anachronistic and not able to change and evolve. The lasting effects of this kind of stereotypical thinking still create huge obstacles for contemporary Native Americans in that economic inequalities and lack of opportunities are explained away by the repetition of the old stereotypes (Lipsitz 1). Monkman breaks through the repetition of these thought patterns by raising expectations that his protagonist, Miss Chief, through her demeanor and fashionable accessories, must by necessity have an i-pad and cell phone in her purse. In short, Monkman's re-imagined Indian is a smart, vigorous Indian in ascendancy over the white race and more in tune with contemporary culture than any white participants.

Diverse groups of supposedly masculine and heterosexual men are found to be gay, such as cowboys and members of the military. By outing them Monkman furthers his goal to prove that a gender spectrum is underlying every culture in the hope that Native groups reinstate the positions traditionally reserved for two spirit people in pre-contact time. On a larger scale, it argues that society at large ought to embrace a gender spectrum.

Monkman's critique of art history should give a boost to postcolonial investigations of artwork produced during the centuries of colonial power proliferation. Furthermore, his scathing criticism of modernist art as ineffective, empty and powerless

should also give budding artists pause to consider the role and power inherent in visual representations. Specifically landscape painting should be reconsidered by artists as potential carriers of multilayered meaning. In regards to Native art, Monkman expects the viewer and most likely the museum world at large to take note of racial inequalities and consider provenance, contextuality and importance for Native groups when educating or displaying Native artifacts. Furthermore, contemporary artists should be considered artists first and Native second, so that stereotypical expectations will not undermine their creativity.

While Monkman is critiquing Western art, Western art history, Modern art, Western historical narratives, and Western stereotypes of Native Americans as well as prejudices against homosexuality without restraint, it is interesting to compare his seemingly sovereign freedom to express his opinion with the struggle many Native American artists faced only thirty years earlier. While artists such as Bill Reid, Norval Morrisseau and Allan Houser were fighting ethnological pigeon holing to be accepted as modernists who use a tribally rooted visual vocabulary with a universal reach, Monkman's struggle against bigotry, the Catholic Church and historical mythmaking plays out on a stage where he enjoys the status of an artist with a capital A (Young Man 90, 81). Gone are the discussions regarding his Indian-ness, his blood quantum, tribal enrollment, whether he grew up on a reservation or not, whether he has the right to address Indian issues and use Indian designs or not, all of which were obstacles faced by earlier Native artists, such as Fritz Scholder and Bill Reid (Townsend-Gault 225).

By refusing to tether his art to a particular Native culture and instead attacking pervasive popular myths from the inside and by ironically and at times mockingly re-

interpreting well-known art, figures and poses, Monkman defends and invigorates Indianness. In the paintings investigated in this paper, he rejects defeat and instead infuses his figures with the subversiveness of sexual power, which supplants old meaning with new.

When taking into account Monkman's photographs, acrylic paintings and installations, his overall goal seems to be to effect a change in our contemporary culture towards greater acceptance of a broad gender spectrum, racial diversity and Native American cultures in general. When using the word "culture," Matthew Arnold's 1869 book of essays Culture and Anarchy comes to mind, which influenced the debate surrounding culture until the middle of the twentieth century. Arnold defines culture as the best that man has ever thought or known in the service of enlightenment and peace for all. In his mind anarchy, the loud, rough, destroying and uncouth rebellion by the lower classes, poses a grave danger to culture, the establishment and peace, and ought to be suppressed by all means (Arnold 8-12). Otherwise "...[he] begins to create by his operations a confusion of which mischievous people can take advantage, and which at any rate, by troubling the common course of business throughout the country, tends to cause distress, and so to increase the sort of anarchy and social disintegration which had previously commenced" (Arnold 9). Monkman, in his mischievousness, fulfills Arnold's dire prediction. By creating an anarchical, loud and boisterous upheaval in *The Triumph of Mischief*, Monkman undermines the trusted ideals espoused by the establishment. He instead creates a boost for the "glow of life and thought" (Arnold 8) as his envisioned culture boasts even more of the best that man ever thought, understood or invented through the inclusion of formerly suppressed culture groups. This new and inclusive

nation also is meant to ensure a more lasting peace for society, as everybody would have an equal stake in stability.

## FIGURES



Fig.1. *Kent Monkman and Miss Chief*. 12 April 2012.  
<<http://kentmonkman.com/biography.php>>.



Fig. 2. *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 3. Cher and Sonny Bono. 26 April 2012.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxoWto09Oyg>.



Fig. 4. *Boudoir de Berdache*. Kent Monkman, 2010. *The Triumph of Mischief* Installation. Art Gallery of Hamilton and Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art. Traveling exhibition from 2007-2010.





Fig. 5. *Miss Chief*. Mannequin in *The Triumph of Mischief* Installation.



Fig. 6. *Théâtre de Cristal*. *The Triumph of Mischief* Installation.



Fig. 7. *In a Stiff Current*. Frederic S. Remington, 1892, oil on canvas. Sid Richardson Collection of Western Art, Fort Worth, Texas.





Fig. 8. *Trappers at Fault: Looking for the Trail*. Arthur F. Tait, circa 1852-1860, oil on canvas. Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado.



Fig. 9. *The Rape of Daniel Boone Junior*. Kent Monkman, 2002, acrylic on canvas. Collection of Gisèle Gordon.



Fig. 10. *Artist and Model*. Kent Monkman, 2003, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the artist.



Fig. 11. *Portrait of the Artist as Hunter*. Kent Monkman, 2002, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.





Figs. 12, 13. *Cindy Silverscreen* and *Vaudeville Star* From: *Miss Chief: The Emergence of a Legend*. Kent Monkman, 2005, chromogenic prints on metallic paper.



Figs. 14, 15. *Film Director* and *The Trapper's Bride*. From: *Miss Chief: The Emergence of a Legend*. Kent Monkman, 2005, chromogenic prints on metallic paper.



Fig. 16. *Hunter*. From: *Miss Chief: The Emergence of a Legend*. Kent Monkman, 2005, chromogenic print on metallic paper.



Fig. 17. *The Trapper's Bride*. Alfred Jacob Miller, 1837, watercolor on paper. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland.



Fig. 18. *Louis Vuitton Quiver*. Kent Monkman, leather, printed fabric and arrows. Collection of the artist.



Fig. 19. *Yosemite Valley*. Albert Bierstadt, 1868, oil on canvas. Oakland Art Museum, Oakland, California.





Fig. 20. *The Lonely Cross*. Thomas Cole, 1845, oil on canvas. Musee d'Orsay, Paris, France.



Fig. 21. *Autumn in the Catskills*. Thomas Cole, 1827, oil on wood panel. 47.3 x 64.4 cm. Arnot Art Museum, Elmira, New York.



Fig. 22. *Mount Hood*. Albert Bierstadt, 1863, oil on canvas. Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon.



Fig. 23. *Looking up the Yosemite Valley*. Albert Bierstadt, 1865-67, oil on canvas. The Haggin Museum, Stockton, California.



Fig. 24. *Not the End of the Trail*. Kent Monkman, 2004, acrylic on canvas. Private Collection.



Fig. 25. *The End of the Trail*. James Earle Fraser, 1915, bronze. National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.



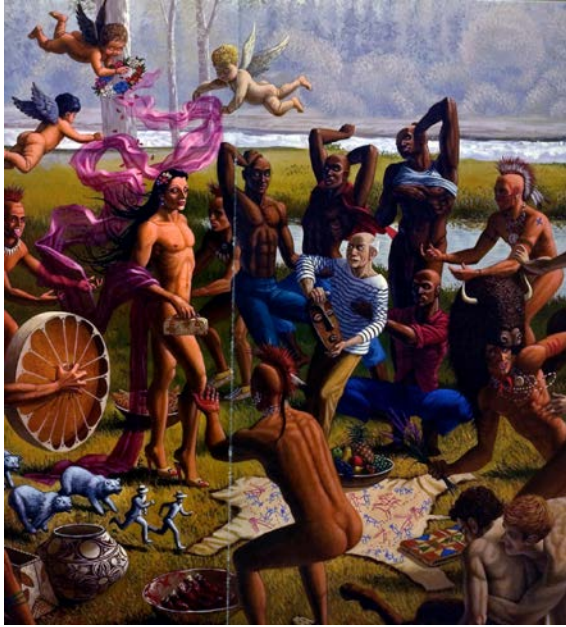


Fig. 26. Miss Chief Approaching Picasso. Detail of *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 27. Circle of Dancers with White Bison Calf. Detail of *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 28. Two Frontiersmen and Pigeon's Egg Head. Detail of *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 29. Duchamp's *Fountain*. Detail of *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.





Fig. 30. *Medicine Mask Dance*. Paul Kane, oil on canvas. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.



Fig. 31. Centaur and Indian with Bosch's detail in background. Detail of *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

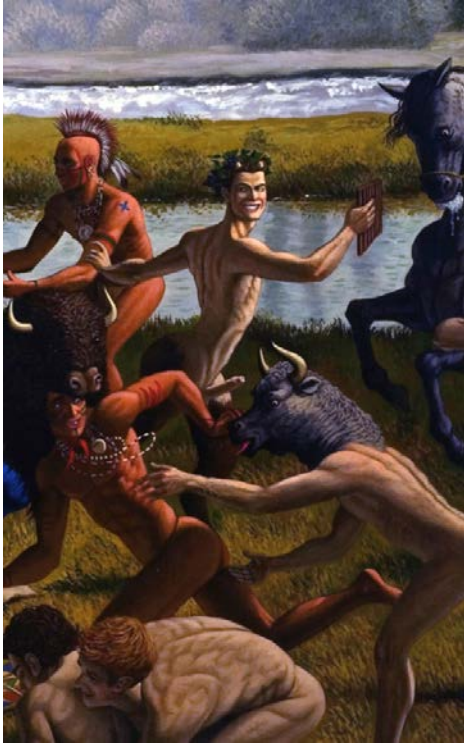


Fig. 32. Pan, Minotaur and Buffalo Dancer. Detail of *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

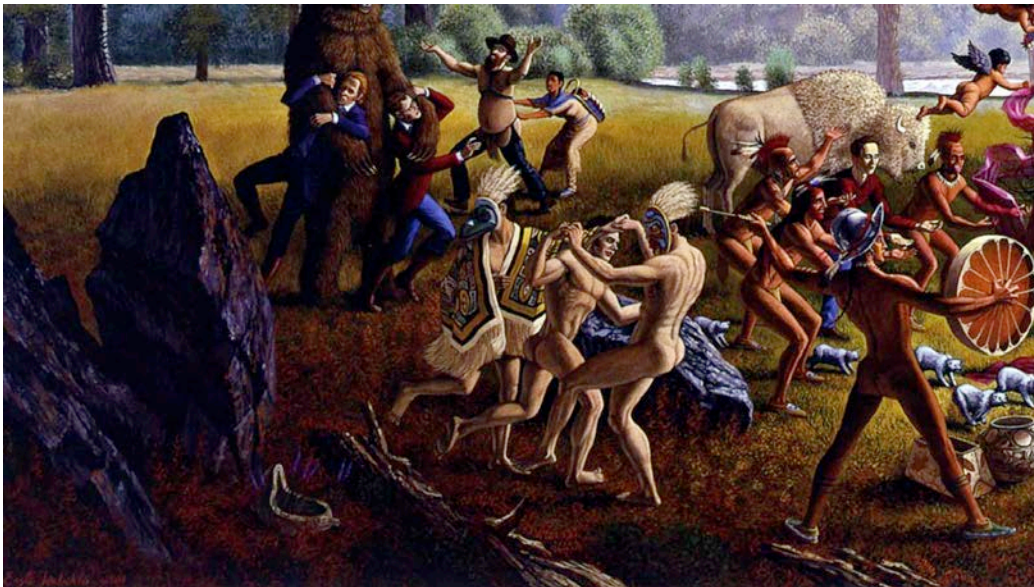


Fig. 33. Charbonneau, Lewis and Clark, and Tlingit Dancers. Detail of *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.





Fig. 34. Molestation of Priest and Gold Seeker. Detail of *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 35. Pegasus and Fighting Indians. Detail of *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 36. *The Ship of Fools*. Hieronymus Bosch, 1490-1500, oil on panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.



Fig. 37. *The Haywain Triptych*. Hieronymus Bosch, 1490-95, oil on panel. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.





Fig. 38. *The Entry of Christ into Brussels*. James Ensor, 1888, oil on canvas. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California.

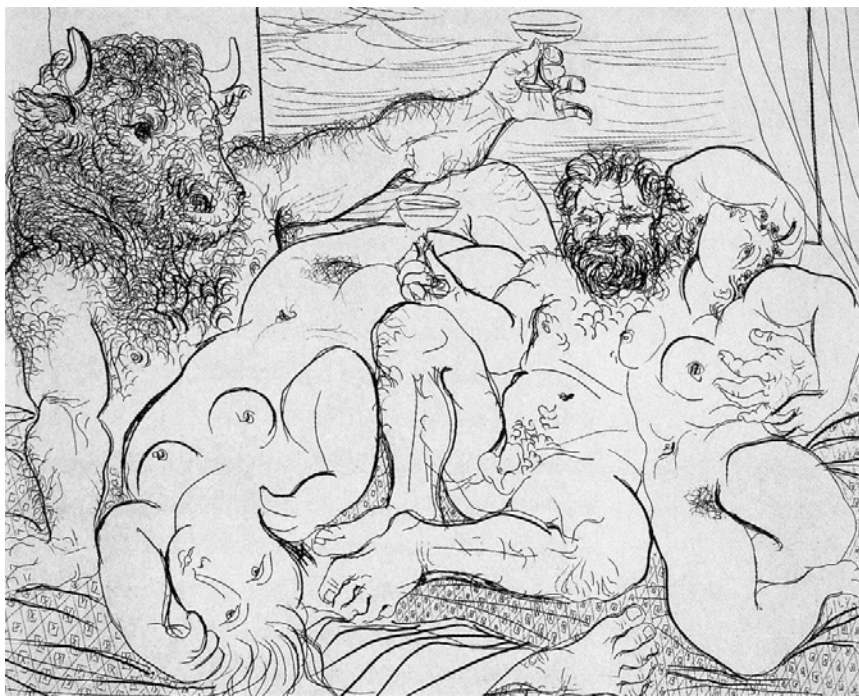


Fig. 39. *Drinking Minotaur & Sculptor with Two Models*. *Vollard Suite*. Pablo Picasso, 1933, drypoint, etching. Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York.



Fig. 40. *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*. Jan van Eyck, 1435, oil on panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.



Fig. 41. *Madonna and Child in Glory*. Titian, 1520-1525, oil on panel. Pinacoteca Vaticana, Rome, Italy.





Fig. 42. *Detail of Trappers of Men*. Kent Monkman, 2006, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



Fig. 43. *Last Judgment*. Michelangelo, 1536-1541, fresco. Sistine Chapel, Rome, Italy.



Fig. 44. St. Sebastian. Sandro Botticelli, 1484, tempera on wood panel. Gemäldegalerie Berlin, Germany.





Fig. 45. *Garden of Earthly Delights* with detail. Hieronymus Bosch, 1490-1510, oil on wood panel. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.



Fig. 46. *Heaven and Earth*. Kent Monkman, 2001, acrylic on canvas. Collection of Alfredo Ferran Calle.



Fig. 47. *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*. Kent Monkman, 2001, acrylic on canvas. Private collection.





Fig. 48. *Desmoiselles D'Avignon*. Pablo Picasso, 1907, oil on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 49. *Dying Slave*. Michelangelo, 1513, marble. The Louvre, Paris, France.



Fig. 50. Detail of *Not the End of the Trail*. Kent Monkman, 2004, acrylic on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 51. Pioneer Woman. Leo Friedlander, 1935, marble. Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.



Fig. 52. *Pioneer Woman Statue*. Pioneer Square, Worland, Wyoming.

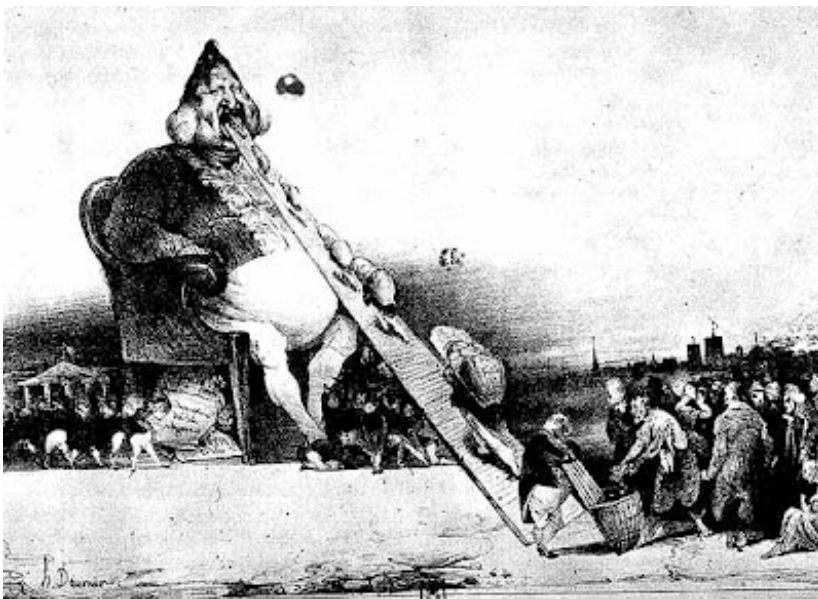


Fig. 53. *Gargantua*. Honoré Daumier, 1831, lithograph. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, California.





Fig. 54. *Dance to the Berdache*. George Catlin, 1832-39, oil. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 55. *Perseus and Andromeda*. Titian, 1554-56, oil. Wallace Collection, National Gallery, London.





Fig. 56. *The Impending Storm*. Kent Monkman, 2004, acrylic on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 57. Detail of *Impending Storm*. Kent Monkman, 2004, acrylic on canvas. Private Collection.



Fig. 58. *Kiks'adi Frog Clan Crest Hat. Frog Clan Potlatch Hat.* Tlingit. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Alaska State Museum, Juneau, Alaska.



Fig. 59. Miss Chief inside circle of dancers. Detail of *The Triumph of Mischief*. Kent Monkman, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.





Fig. 60. *No-ho-mun-ya, One Who Gives No Attention*. George Catlin, 1844, oil on canvas. Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Fig. 61. *Wi-jun-jon, Pigeon's Egg Head Going to and Returning from Washington*. George Catlin, 1837-39, oil on canvas. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D. C.



Fig. 62. *Rebellion*. Kent Monkman, 2003, acrylic on canvas. Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank.



Fig. 63. *The Big Basket Seller*. Kent Monkman, 2002, acrylic on canvas. Collection of James Kudelka & Jim Wies.





Fig. 64. *The Oxbow*. Thomas Cole, 1836, oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.



Fig. 65. *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*. Jacques Louis David, 1799, oil on canvas. Musée de Louvre, Paris, France.



Fig. 66. *Three Lattice Cradleboards*. Kiowa, around 1900, cloth, deerskin, glass beads, metal, wood. Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, Bristol, Rhode Island.



Fig. 67. *Painted Ceremonial Robe*. Innu, middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado.



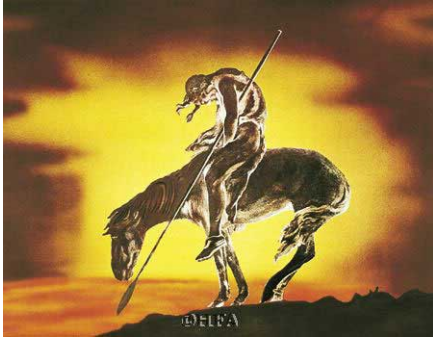


Fig. 68-70. Objects based on Fraser's *The End of the Trail* sculpture. 26 April 2012.  
[http://www.google.com/search?q=Fraser%27s+The+end+of+the+trail&hl=en&client=firefox-a&hs=vcT&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&prmd=imvns&source=lnms&tbn=isch&ei=YoWZT4PW0eioiQLFtszIDw&sa=X&oi=mode\\_link&ct=mode&cd=2&ved=0CAsQ\\_AUoAQ&biw=1600&bih=771&sei=Z4WZT8jVH4jbiALr6\\_H1Dw](http://www.google.com/search?q=Fraser%27s+The+end+of+the+trail&hl=en&client=firefox-a&hs=vcT&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&prmd=imvns&source=lnms&tbn=isch&ei=YoWZT4PW0eioiQLFtszIDw&sa=X&oi=mode_link&ct=mode&cd=2&ved=0CAsQ_AUoAQ&biw=1600&bih=771&sei=Z4WZT8jVH4jbiALr6_H1Dw).



Fig. 69. Watch with *The End of the Trail* insert.



Fig. 70. Navajo silver belt buckle with *The End of the Trail* insert.



Fig. 71. *Athenian Amphora*. 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC. Staatliche Antikensammlung, Munich.



Fig. 72. *Catlin's Indian Gallery*. 1883. Smithsonian Institution Archive, Washington, D.C.





Fig. 73. Interior of the *Boudoir de Berdache. The Triumph of Mischief* Installation. Art Gallery of Hamilton and Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art. Traveling exhibition from 2007-2010.



Fig. 74. *Nova Reperta: Vespucci Awakens a Sleeping America*. Jan van der Straet, 1600, Antwerp, Belgium.

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