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A Critical Analysis of Jeffrey Gibson's Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House, A Queer Counter-Monument

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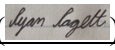
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF JEFFREY GIBSON'S *BECAUSE ONCE YOU ENTER MY HOUSE, IT BECOMES OUR HOUSE*, A QUEER COUNTER-MONUMENT

by

Ryan Mark Pagett

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Art History and Visual Culture
at
Lindenwood University

(Ryan Pagett) () (05/08/2023)_____
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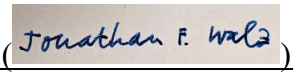
(Dr. Jonathan Frederick Walz) () (June 17, 2023)_____
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ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: A Critical Analysis of Jeffrey Gibson's *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House*, A Queer Counter-Monument

Ryan Pagett, Master of Arts, 2023

Thesis Directed by: Committee chair, Dr. Jonathan Frederick Walz, Ph.D.

This thesis discusses Indigenous Queer artist Jeffrey Gibson's active engagement with his queer identity in his work. Using the five aspects of a counter-monument as defined by Stevens, Franck, and Fazakerley's *Counter-monuments: the anti-monumental and the dialogic*; using queer as both a form of identification; and using queer as a verbal strategy, this thesis argues that Gibson's latest work, *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House* is a "queer counter-monument." Counter-monumentalism was a movement initially developed in Germany post-World War II in opposition to monumentalism as a system of oppression. Counter-monumental work disengages from traditional monuments in both form and subject, often addressing the more obscure and distressing parts of history and wrongful ideologies, whereas traditional monuments tend to glorify specific events, people, and periods of history. Contemporary queer monuments, which actively engage in subjects dealing with the LGBTQIA+ communities, likewise seek to distance themselves from traditional monument structures in both subject and form. The following text briefly discusses several of Gibson's works, highlighting key themes such as Indigenous futurism, community, connectivity, and collaboration. All these themes featured in *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House*, result in a unique combination of queer and counter-monument strategies.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

Multidisciplinary queer Indigenous artist Jeffrey Gibson has found success in many solo and group exhibitions. Some of the most recent include *Jeffrey Gibson: The Body Electric* at the Frist Art Museum (Feb 3, 2023–Apr 23, 2023) and SITE Santa Fe (May 6, 2022-September 11, 2022); *Infinite Indigenous Queer Love* at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum (October 2021-March 2022); and *Jeffrey Gibson: Beyond the Horizon* at the Kavi Gupta Gallery in Chicago (November 13, 2021-January 8, 2022). Gibson has work in the permanent collections of many prestigious museums and galleries, such as the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the National Gallery of Canada, and the National Museum of the American Indian, among others. He was also a recipient of a MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant," in 2019. Since 2012, Gibson has lived and maintained a studio in upstate New York as a working artist and faculty member of Bard College. This thesis focuses on Gibson's *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House* (hereafter *BOYEMHIBOH*), which was first seen at Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens, New York, as part of their *MONUMENTS NOW* exhibition, on view from July of 2020 to April of 2021. This exhibition was broken into three parts. Part I opened throughout the summer of 2020 with major new commissions by Gibson, Paul Ramírez Jonas, and Xaviera Simmons. Part II and III went on view together October 10, 2020. Part II: *Call and Response*, encompassed ten monumental sculptures by the Park's 2020 Artist Fellows, and Part III: *The Next Generation* featured a multi-faceted monument project collectively realized by high school students. All three parts of the exhibition remained on view together through March 14, 2021.[1] According to the Socrates Sculpture Park website, this exhibition sought "to address the role of monuments in society and commemorate underrepresented narratives such as diasporic,

[1] "MONUMENTS NOW," Socrates Sculpture Park, 2020, https://socratessculpturepark.org/exhibitions/monuments-now/.

Indigenous, and queer histories."[2] Gibson's contribution to this project was on view from July 10, 2020, to March 21, 2021. As described by Gibson on the Socrates website, "[this work] serves as an homage to [the] ingenuity of Indigenous North American peoples and cultures, to pre-Columbian Mississippian architecture, and to queer camp aesthetics. [I] designed [this] multi-tiered structure to reference the earthen architecture of the ancient metropolis of Cahokia, which was the largest city of the North American Indigenous Mississippian people at its height in the thirteenth century [CE]. The earth mound of the pre-Columbian ziggurat is represented [by a] plywood structure adorned with a vibrant surface of wheat-pasted posters. The posters integrate geometric designs inspired by the [The Great] Serpent Mound [in] Ohio, another monument of the Mississippi Valley, alongside texts that operate as activist slogans. [A series of Indigenous led performances, curated by Gibson, were used] to activate the structure over the course of the installation."[3]

As of early 2023, no one has described Gibson's work as a Queer Counter-Monument. However, Socrates' *MONUMENTS NOW* exhibition gave Gibson the perfect opportunity to create such a work. As noted above, this exhibition looked to commemorate underrepresented narratives such as diasporic, Indigenous, and queer histories. The following definitions are defined by *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Diasporic is the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland, whether involuntarily or by migration. Indigenous is being of, or relating to the earliest known inhabitants of a place and especially of a place that was colonized by a now-dominant group. Queer is of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction that is not limited to people of a particular gender identity or sexual

[2] "MONUMENTS NOW," Socrates Sculpture Park, 2020, https://socratessculpturepark.org/exhibitions/monuments-now/.

[3] "'MONUMENTS NOW' – Part I: Jeffrey Gibson," Socrates Sculpture Park, 2020, https://socratessculpturepark.org/exhibition/jeffrey-gibson/.

orientation. I discuss the term "queer" further in my Methodology section. Using these core values, Gibson crafted a work that addresses underrepresented, Indigenous, and queer peoples and histories. However, I wish to push interpretation of this work further by noting how alike it is with both queer monuments and counter-monuments of the past. Using historic examples, I will interrogate the queer and counter-monument aspects of Gibson's structure to illuminate how it combines characteristics from both to create a new Queer Counter-Monument.

Literature Review: Monuments & Counter-Monuments

For centuries, the monument has been a sign of strength and courage, or a representation of one's ideals and values. The word "monument" as defined by *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* originates from the Greek *mnemosynon* and the Latin *moneo*, *monere*, which means "to remind," "to advise" or "to warn." Monuments are structures created to commemorate a person, event, or issue relevant to a social group as a part of their remembrance of historic times or cultural heritage. A memorial on the other hand, as defined by *The Inclusive Historian's Handbook*, generally recalls the dead or the experiences of profound loss.[4] Despite their differences, both monuments and memorials share history in their use of memory. They come in all shapes and sizes, from the neolithic dolmens to the modern-day war memorials that dot the United States of America landscape. However, following World War II and the horrific events of the Holocaust, new monuments began to emerge in Germany. Although artworks that could be classified as Counter-Monuments existed before this time, I choose to highlight the following examples, as this reaction to the Holocaust was the first time a larger group of artists were creating them for a

[4] Seth C. Bruggeman, "Memorials and Monuments," The Inclusive Historian's Handbook (American Association for State and Local History, and National Council on Public History, September 20, 2019), https://inclusivehistorian.com/memorials-and-monuments/.

united cause. Consider this quote from James E. Young's, *The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today*:

> Traditionally, state-sponsored memory of a national past [in Germany aimed] to affirm the righteousness of [the] nation's birth, even its divine election. The matrix of [the] nation's monuments traditionally emplots the story of ennobling events, [triumphs] over barbarism, and recalls the martyrdom of those who gave their lives and the struggle for national existence…What then of Germany, a nation justly forced to remember the suffering and devastation it once caused [amid the Holocaust] in the name of its people? How does a state incorporate its crimes against others into its national memorial landscape? How does a state recite, much less commemorate, the litany of its misdeeds, making them part of its reason for being? [Enter the counter-monument, an attempt by artists ethically sure] of their duty to remember but aesthetically skeptical of the assumptions underpinning traditional memorial forms.[5]

Typical monuments in Germany amid the fighting of World War II were created as propaganda, celebrating the power and exploits of the Nazi regime, as well the classic tradition of the Greek and Roman empires.[6] Works such as *Decathlon Athlete* by Arno Breker promoted ideal images of the "Aryan" race, a term, as described by the *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, that [was] reconceptualized by the Nazi party to promote German people while denigrating Jews, Black people, Roma and Sinti people, and others as "non-Aryans."[7] By creating counter-monuments, works historically and visually different from their traditional predecessors, the people of Germany looked to rectify their past and memorialize what shouldn't be forgotten.

The terminology and analysis in scholarship on counter-monuments has often remained imprecise with writers in English and German employing the term "counter-monument" or "Gegendenkmal" in different and sometimes confusing ways.[8] Through the work of scholars

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[5] James E. Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today." *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 267–96. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343784, 270-71.

[6] Young, "The Counter-Monument," 271.

[7] "Aryan," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, September 29, 2020), https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/aryan-1.

[8] Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck, and Ruth Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments: The Anti-Monumental and the Dialogic," *The Journal of Architecture* 23, no. 5 (April 2018): Abstract, 722. https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2018.1495914.

Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck, and Ruth Fazakerley in their insightful essay, *Counter-Monuments: The Anti-Monumental and the Dialogic*, precise language and strategies for discussing counter-monuments has been created. In their words, "Opposition towards the traditional monument was usually done in one of two ways: by adopting anti-monumental strategies to counter traditional monument principles or by designing a memorial that looked to counter a specific existing monument and the values it represented, [also deemed the dialogic approach.]"[9] Steven, Franck, and Fazakerley posits that Counter-monuments differ from traditional monuments in at least one of five aspects: subject, form, site, visitor experience, or meaning.[10]

Concerning the subject, traditional monuments glorify an event, person, or celebrate an ideology. In contrast, counter-monumental works often recognize darker events, such as the Holocaust, or the troubling side of an event that might have been glorified in other times, such as a war.[11] They might also look to celebrate ideologies atypical to the heteronormative male mainstream, such as gay rights or the achievements of women. For instance, since 1996, Gunter Demnig has been placing small, engraved brass plaques set into the pavement throughout Germany. This ongoing art project, titled *Stolpersteine* (Stumbling Blocks) (fig. 1), individually identifies former residents of adjacent buildings who were Holocaust victims, giving their names and dates of birth, deportation, and death.[12]

As to form, the most notable and common feature of counter-monumentality is its opposition to conventional monumental form and the employment of alternative, contrasting

[9] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," Abstract.
[10] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," 722.
[11] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," 722.
[12] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," 722-23.

design techniques, materials, and duration. Abstract form, rather than figuration, is often one such response.[13] Demnig's *Stolpersteine* differs from a traditional monument in that they are small, rather than largescale, and comprise multiple plaques throughout a country, rather than a single work. Traditional monuments are often figural; *Stolpersteine* is not.

This brings up the third aspect of counter-monuments: site. Traditional monuments are often prominent, obvious, or set apart from everyday space through natural topography, height, or enclosure. Counter-monuments are often intentionally small and placed out of eyesight as to be encountered by chance.[14] Demnig's *Stolpersteine* is a good example, as the work is heavily integrated into the everyday urban space. Not only are his plaques widely dispersed, but they are placed low within the ground, avoiding easy detection. For some, this might seem a negative, as the public might traverse their day without realizing the work and tragic history they currently walk past; however, for others, this might seem positive. Those passersby who, by chance, happen to see, stop, and read these plaques, are struck by the realization of the dark history they are walking past. This chance encounter might leave them wondering how many other locations bear such unseen horrors, a key characteristic of this work. This leads to the fourth aspect of counter-monuments: visitor experience.

Traditional monuments are often discrete objects to be viewed from a distance. Counter-monuments typically unsettle these conventions of reception by inviting close, bodily encounters by visitors.[15] Demnig's *Stolpersteine* translates to "stumbling stone," evoking the idea of accidental discovery and close inspection. One is immediately faced with an unseen history by tripping over these low-set plaques. This experience seems similar to walking through a field of

[13] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," 723.
[14] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," 727.
[15] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," 727-728.

overgrown grass only to trip or knock over a long-forgotten tombstone. Just because horrors of a dark past are often invisible to the naked eye doesn't mean they don't lie below.

The final aspect of counter-monuments identified by Stevens, Franck, and Fazakerley is meaning. Traditional monuments are didactic, imparting clear, unified messages. Counter-monuments, by contrast, often remain ambiguous and resistant to any unified interpretation.[16] Their meanings often depend on visitors' historical knowledge or supplementary information made available through signs, brochures, guides, or interpretive centers. Berlin's *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* is a vivid example of a counter-monument (fig. 2). No title appears anywhere on this work, its design is unlike that of most other memorials, and without previous knowledge, passers-by may be uncertain about what they're viewing. Brochures, guards, and a concealed underground museum all offer information that the memorial itself does not disclose. Abstract forms such as this can be helpful in avoiding obvious thematic representation and allow the work to be open to multiple and potentially conflicting interactions and interpretations.[17]

How an audience interacts with an artwork varies, regardless of an artist's intent. Therefore, interaction should be considered when analyzing a work of art as well. For instance, in 1986, Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz created *Monument against Fascism, War and Violence—and for Peace and Human Rights in Harburg*, a twelve-meter high, lead-clad aluminum column. This structure, which invited passersby to inscribe their names on its surface, served as a pledge of vigilance against fascism. As time progressed, the column would be annually lowered into the ground. This allowed further names to be inscribed until the work was lowered entirely into the ground, its memory and pledge to be preserved in the hearts and minds

[16] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," 728.
[17] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," 728-729.

of the community. In the minds of the artists, citizens would neatly scrawl their names in rows, a visual echo of the war memorials of another age. Execution did not follow design intent however, as the work became an illegible scribble of names scratched over names, spray paint graffiti art, swastika symbols, and more (fig. 3).[18] Described by Stevens, Franck, and Fazakerley's *Counter-Monuments: The Anti-Monumental and the Dialogic*, "the work became an eyesore, [a work of graffiti]. However, as a local newspaper succinctly put it, '[This reaction against the work] brings us closer to the truth [of the public opinion's than any] list of well-meaning signatures. The inscriptions, a conglomerate of approval, hatred, anger, and stupidity, are like a fingerprint of our city applied to the column.'"[19] This work became a conversation of constant distaste for the public. As such, when comparing traditional monuments with counter-monuments, another trait that can be linked to the site is the work's ability to disrupt a space.

The traditional monument is often criticized as being benign once erected within a space.[20] Made to maintain its physical integrity, it may over time lose its meaning, becoming lost or stagnant in the public's minds. Some may view a work such as *Monument against Fascism* as a failed work, succumbing to its graffiti surface and sinking into the background of public consciousness like any other traditional monument. On the other hand, given its ability to change and remain a restless surface that discomforts the public, this social dynamic might be what locks the counter-monument within the minds of that public for years to come.[21]

[18] Young, "The Counter-Monument," 282-283.
[19] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," 783.
[20] Young, "The Counter-Monument," 283.
[21] Young, "The Counter-Monument," 284.

Literature Review: Jeffrey Gibson, *biography & oeuvre*

The following is a recapitulation of Jeffrey Gibson's life and career, highlighting key exhibitions and the themes that repeatedly appear throughout his work. Many of these themes are considered when analyzing *BOYEMHIBOH*.

Born in 1972 in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Jeffrey Gibson grew up in many major urban centers worldwide in the United States, Germany, Korea, and England, as his father worked as a civil engineer for the U.S. Department of Defense. Living abroad, Gibson felt he was treated like an American, but upon his return to the United States, he experienced marginalization as a Native American. This prolonged travel left Gibson without a sense of community and identity within Indigenous culture, a concept he has since explored in his work. In 1995, Gibson received a BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago, finding inspiration in teachers such as Maureen Sherlock, a professor of philosophy and critical theory of film; Susanne Doremus; Jim Lutes; and the writings of Raymond Carver. It was at this time in the early 1990s, with the rise of "identity politics," that Gibson came out as gay.[22] In 1998, Gibson traveled to London, where he studied for his MA in painting from the Royal College of Art, studies which Chief Phillip Martin facilitated through the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.[23] From 1996-98, Gibson studied, remaining an extra year in London. He spent a great deal of time in the museums of London, considering American culture from a distance and looking at as much art as he could.[24]

For several years upon returning to the United States, Gibson worked as a process-based abstract painter. However, in 2011, Gibson's work began to change. Working with a therapist

[22] Jeffrey Gibson and Jen Mergel, "'The Human Noise We Sat There Making': A Conversation With Jeffrey Gibson," in *Jeffrey Gibson: Like A Hammer* (Denver, CO: Denver Art Museum, 2018), 107.

[23] Gibson and Mergel, "'The Human Noise We Sat There Making," 107.

[24] Gibson and Mergel, "'The Human Noise We Sat There Making," 107-08.

and physical trainer, Gibson began to process feelings of anger, hurt, and trauma related to being gay and Native American, in addition to concepts of class, and race in general. He began to understand how his relationship with the art world triggered negative feelings.[25] With their help Gibson learned,

> To listen to my physical self, both mind and body. We have senses and animal-like instincts available to us that only reveal themselves when we quiet down, remove distractions, and [hear] what our bodies are trying to tell us. This process taught me to open up [and] share myself for who I am. I learned: If you give it, [yourself], away early on, people can't take it from you. If you [can] be generous, be generous.[26]

By 2012, Gibson began to create works in collaboration with more traditional Native artists in beadwork, engraving, drum making, and mask making. In his New York show *one becomes the other*, Gibson envisioned an alternative history: what could have happened to the work of the Museum of Modern Art's 1941 show, *Indian Art of the United States*, if such work hadn't been ignored post-World War II? For years, the Indigenous people of the United States have struggled to find recognition within this nation's borders. Yet, when finally given an opportunity to speak out, seemingly nothing comes from it. Gibson questions why this occurred, demanding more knowledge and acknowledgment of past and present Indigenous art and histories beyond the prior mainstream. By generating an alternative history, Gibson is highlighting past problems but also developing a present strategy and solution for moving forward into the future. This is where themes surrounding Indigenous futurism arise, a trope that can be found repeatedly throughout Gibson's work.[27]

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[25] Gibson and Mergel, "'The Human Noise We Sat There Making," 111-12.

[26] Gibson and Mergel, "'The Human Noise We Sat There Making," 112.

[27] Another, more current example, of a similar engagement is *Jeffrey Gibson: When Fire Is Applied to a Stone It Cracks*; an exhibition Gibson created in tandem with Dr. Christian Ayne Crouch at the Brooklyn Museum in 2020. "Unfolding in three galleries, [this exhibit showcased] the breadth of Gibson's practice… In keeping with his multidisciplinary practice and interests, Gibson chose a wide range of works from the Museum's holdings of Native American art, American art, and photography, as well as from the Brooklyn Museum Library Special Collections and Archives [to be showcased alongside his work. This included works by Native American artists, and works

Indigenous futurism is an artistic movement that discusses how Indigenous cultures worldwide intersect with technology; it also imagines what Indigenous futures could be like.[28] The term was created by Anishinaabe author and professor Grace Dillon in her book *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* and inspired by Afrofuturism. A movement that includes visual art novels, video games, comic books and more, Indigenous futurism relates to the genres of science fiction and speculative fiction, often rewriting and reimaging historical events, critiquing the exclusion of Native people in science fiction and mainstream media, and recognizing the strength of Native cultural practices and beliefs. Artworks in this movement often imagine a past where European colonization of Indigenous lands did not occur. In this scenario, artists consider how Indigenous culture might be integrated into modern and future mainstream cultures.[29] Gibson often engages Indigenous futurist ideas in texts, which shall be covered in detail in the analysis portion of this thesis.

The Museum of Modern Art's 1941 exhibition *Indian Art of the United States* also inspired Gibson to use materials and formats that signified his "Native Americanness." He is a Native American artist, general, non-Native audiences may be unsure of how to think critically

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depicting Native Americans, not by Native artists].…The third gallery foregrounds material from the Brooklyn Museum's Archives, which sheds light on the early twentieth-century formation of the institution's Native American collection by Stewart Culin, the Museum's Curator of Ethnology from 1903 to 1929. Although Gibson and Crouch acknowledge Culin's profound role in establishing the collection, the material on view centers Indigenous subjects and culture, rejecting the exclusion and erasure of Indigenous histories and stories that had been fundamental to the narratives that institutions [like the Brooklyn Museum initially promoted]. Instead, this show reflects the continuity and endurance of Indigenous communities and artists. Through the combination of collection objects and his own work in the three spaces, Gibson encourages visitors to rethink long-held preconceptions about "Native American art" and notions of monolithic cultural identity."

"Jeffrey Gibson: When Fire Is Applied to a Stone It Cracks." Brooklyn Museum. Accessed May 19, 2022. https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/exhibitions/3389.

You can see yet another example through *Jeffrey Gibson: Sweet Bitter Love* and *Jeffrey Gibson: Beyond the Horizon* created, at the Newberry Library and the Kavi Gupta gallery, in Chicago in 2021-22.

Jeffrey Gibson, Abigail Winograd, and Jeffrey Gibson, *Jeffrey Gibson: Beyond The Horizon* (Chicago, IL: Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 2022).

[28] "Indigenous Futurism," MacKenzie Art Gallery, August 10, 2022, https://mackenzie.art/digital-art/learn-about-digital-art/indigenous-futurism/.

[29] "Indigenous Futurism," We R Native, February 9, 2022, https://www.wernative.org/articles/indigenous-futurism.

about what Gibson presents in his work. The absence of these conversations was reason enough for Gibson to develop such work.[30] Taking inspiration from intertribal powwow garments and culture (fig. 4), Gibson can create works recognized by the broader Indigenous community, as intertribal powwows are events attended by many unique Indigenous tribes rather than a select few. Gibson speaks to a majority by taking inspiration from Jingle Dress Dancers and Fancy Shawl Dancers. Initially performed by women as a healing method or a form of prayer within their communities, the Jingle Dress Dance has since become part of international powwow culture, through costume and dance competitions.[31]

Some scholars say Gibson might be creating and performing in Jingle Dress-inspired costumes—for example, Gibson's 2016 video performance, *LIKE A HAMMER* (fig. 5)—as an interpretation of drag performance.[32] For instance, in an excerpt from Anne Ellegood's essay, *Jeffrey Gibson: Critical Exuberance*, she describes Gibson's video performance as,

> Acting out his desire to embody this ornate form, [Gibson appears] by turns to be integrated with his costume, [struggling] with how it impacts his mobility and range of motion. The gender-bending and resistance to heteronormativity of drag can portray a range of expressions, from joyful subversion to physical restriction. Both importantly suggest a ritual of sorts, [creating] a space in which gender is constructed by the subject, rather than allowing it to [remain] socially determined and intact as a delimited category. Gibson's performance acknowledges drag as an act of fluidity and self-expression. [His robe's excessiveness] allows for an aesthetic of exuberance he has been inclined toward since his earliest paintings. The robe, with its accompanying headpiece that shrouds Gibson's face, becomes a site, an indispensable safe space [to transform] his identity. He is at once an insider and outsider, a figure attempting to cross boundaries-of gender, of species, of disciplines-in order to imagine something wholly new.[33]

This work is an excellent example of showing multiple themes: a willingness to enact queer as identity and strategy, an ability to create work that subverts gender roles, and an ability to create

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[30] Gibson and Mergel, "'The Human Noise We Sat There Making," 112-13.

[31] Anne Ellegood, "Jeffrey Gibson: Critical Exuberance," in *Jeffrey Gibson: Like A Hammer* (Denver, CO: Denver Art Museum, 2018), 85-6.

[32] Anne Ellegood, "Jeffrey Gibson," 86.

[33] Anne Ellegood, "Jeffrey Gibson," 86.

pieces that can be described as a "critical exuberance."[34] Critical exuberance is a fundamental aspect of Gibson's work and can be defined as his ability to work in bold colors, lively arrangements of alternating patterns, and copious amounts of materials lavishly adorning surfaces, transforming quotidian objects like punching bags, mirrors, wool blankets, animal hides, or costumes, like the one we see in *LIKE A HAMMER*, into vital objects teeming with energy. Given this propensity for bright colors, and Gibson's use of breathtakingly beautiful craft techniques, which show remarkable care and delicacy of touch, these works exude a sense of optimism, rooted in the belief that a genuine engagement with the past can help us shape a brighter future.[35]

In one of his most recent exhibitions, *INFINITE INDIGENOUS QUEER LOVE*, at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, Missouri, Gibson tackles an immense amount of content and concepts in one show. Gibson describes the project as follows:

> This exhibition concerns the intersections of four powerful words—INFINITE INDIGENOUS QUEER LOVE. The two outer terms suggest boundless spaces and generative, tender relationships. The two interior terms convey markers of identity that Jeffrey Gibson disassembles and reconstructs through his artistic practice as a queer Choctaw-Cherokee man. This title offers a bold, declarative framework for this exhibition which debuts a series of collages, an immersive display featuring three hanging fringe sculptures, and recent videos created [in collaboration with other Indigenous], musicians, and performers. [Shown] together, these dazzling artistic expressions suggest that identity is pieced together by public life, popular culture, and intimate human bonds.[36]

As described by Gibson, the collages are in many ways like house music, a sampling of different histories which tell a story. They reflect on what he's created over the last ten years,

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[34] The term "critical exuberance" was created by writer Anne Ellegood to describe the artworks of Jeffrey Gibson in her essay titled "Jeffrey Gibson: Critical Exuberance" in *Jeffrey Gibson: Like A Hammer*.

Anne Ellegood, "Jeffrey Gibson: Critical Exuberance," in *Jeffrey Gibson: Like A Hammer* (Denver, CO: Denver Art Museum, 2018).

[35] Anne Ellegood, "Jeffrey Gibson," 83.

[36] "Jeffrey Gibson: INFINITE INDIGENOUS QUEER LOVE," The Trustees of Reservations, March 9, 2022, https://thetrustees.org/exhibit/infinite-indigenous-queer-love/.

expanding, re-articulating, and re-introducing new and old themes.[37] The fringe sculptures aim to indigenize and queer monolithic-type sculptures (fig. 27). Gibson specifically references those that appeared in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (fig. 28).[38] The monoliths of *Space Odyssey* were made to represent modernism and the future, with tight angles, clean and reflective surfaces, and monochromatic color.[39] Was this to be epitome of evolution and the future? Gibson didn't think so. By hanging fringe in such a manner, Gibson created the illusion of his own monolithic sculptures; however, given the material he created them with, they're apt to sway and move, shattering the illusion of heavy space, and this image of what modernism was. Discussing the show with senior curator of deCordova, Sarah Montross, Gibson questions:

> How does this [exhibition] reflect queerness? How does it reflect indigeneity? [And] when I say infinite Indigenous queer love, am I speaking about something that I'm looking at and describing? And I've realized, No, not at all. It's my love. I am queer and I am Indigenous, so it's my infinite Indigenous queer love. [This opens this exhibition to anything.] As a visitor, you don't have to be queer. You don't have to be Indigenous. I am bringing that to the table.[40]

This again highlights a mindset found throughout Gibson's art; an attempt to speak to masses rather than a selective group. Keeping this strategy in the forefront of his mind, Gibson continuously create works that speak to all types of people from all walks of life. It also speaks to Gibson's willingness and ability to create work that's open for interpretation. By creating works that allow opportunities for interpretation and dialogue, going even so far as to encourage it within his viewers, Gibson is able to create a universal body of work that speaks to a majority rather than a minority. In my analysis of Gibson's *BOYEMHIBOH,* I will foreground this strategy, as seen in Gibson's choice of text on the structure and his collaboration with others to

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[37] Mary McNeil, "It's My Infinite Indigenous Queer Love: In Conversation with Jeffrey Gibson," Boston Art Review, March 6, 2022, https://bostonartreview.com/reviews/issue-07-jeffrey-gibson-mary-mcneil/.

[38] McNeil, "It's My Infinite Indigenous Queer Love."

[39] McNeil, "It's My Infinite Indigenous Queer Love."

[40] McNeil, "It's My Infinite Indigenous Queer Love."

use the structure. Prior to an analysis of Gibson's work, I would like to briefly discuss the concept of queering and queer potential in an artwork, as it will be a crucial point of discussion in the analysis of *BOYEMHIBOH*.

Methodology: Queer, Queering, Queer Monuments, and Queer Potential Found in Art

Queer is a word that has grown and changed in meaning since its inception. In the early 19th century Queer was broadly used to refer to what was odd, strange, abnormal, or sick, and along these lines employed as a colloquial slur for homosexuality.[41] "In the 1980s, queer was reclaimed by the LGBTIQ community as an umbrella term to designate resistant and non-normative sexuality, seemingly unburdened from the separatist strains that had emerged around gay and lesbian identities. Maintaining a relation to its original meaning, the reclamation "queer" was about being *different*, but unapologetically so… "queer" [operating] as a wish and a hope for a different kind of thinking and engagement with questions [around] sexuality, gender, identity, power, and politics of oppression."[42] Queer can be used in three ways: as a noun, an identity that resists traditional categories, and as a verb. These ways of using queer are often in tension with one another; queer as a *doing* rather than *being* holds political potential, as it focuses on resistance, rather than description, and practice, rather than identity. Using queer as a verb, "queering," challenges and resists expectations or norms.[43]

Monuments often lend visibility to the history of cultural and collective memory, legitimizing present authority and prevailing norms. They may, therefore, operate as important

[41] Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures* (London, UK: Macmillan Education UK, 2020), 2.

[42] McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*, 1-3.

[43] Queer/queering term examples from McCann and Monaghan's, *Queer Theory Now*, 3:

- Noun- "This is the queer space."
- As an identity that resists traditional categories- "I identity as queer."
- Verb- "Let's queer gender!"

mnemonic tokens of dominant powers.[44] "Since the 1980s, there has been a memory turn amongst sexual and gender minorities to remember their past experiences and struggles. This went hand in hand with reclaiming the term "queer," and a rising number of "queer monuments": public objects/artworks dedicated to—and questioning or queering normativity around—the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people, and people with other gender and sexual characteristics (LGBT+)." This definition comes from Martin Zebracki and Ryan Leitner's *Journal of Homosexuality* article, *Queer Monuments: Visibility, (Counter)actions, Legacy*, published in June 2022.[45] This insightful essay highlights three artworks deemed "queer monuments." Whether the works were intended to be seen as queer monuments by the artists varies between the works, which brings up an important point. Although differing from Zebracki and Leitner's quote, I understand that a queer monument doesn't always have to be a work initially dedicated to those of the LGBTQIA+ community. I follow David Halperin's definition of queer as, "whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant." This approach echoes queer theory's challenge to normative views and envisions queer as continually being constructed in opposition to heteronormativity and broader prescriptive norms. This definition of queer is positive for two reasons: for one, it allows the concepts of counter-monuments and queer monuments to exist easily alongside one another, as they often both look to describe minority groups and/or darker sides of history. How they approach the construction of a monument, inclusive but not limited to the five aspects of a counter-monument discussed above, is often very similar as well.[46] A second positive is how a monument, not initially recognized as queer by

[44] Martin Zebracki and Ryan Leitner. "Queer Monuments: Visibility, (Counter)Actions, Legacy." *Journal of Homosexuality* 69, no. 8 (June 2022): 1342–71.

[45] Zebracki, Leitner. "Queer Monuments," 1342–71.

[46] In the case of Zebracki and Leitner's, "Queer Monuments: Visibility, (Counter)Actions, Legacy," they speak to queer monuments as being innately reactions or counter-monuments in how they, "relay alternative memories to hegemonic heteronormativities as represented by the majority of public artwork including monuments," 1342.

the creating artist, can later be queered by its viewing audience. Unless specifically speaking to or about the LGBTQIA+ community, a monument may not consistently be recognized as queer. However, if an audience considers a monument to be queer, regardless of the artist's original intent, is it not then queer? "This understanding of [queer] positions it as performative; it is built out through time, existing not only in the physical space, but in the intersubjectivity [of its viewers], through verbal, nonverbal, and physical interactions. In this case, queer is identified through its relations, not just its identity."[47] Allowing a work to be read in numerous ways, allowing public analysis and opinions from several angles, makes space for "queer potential."

One example of this lies within Julita Wójcik's *Tęcza* (fig. 6), Polish for Rainbow, which was located in Warsaw, Poland's city center from 2012 until it was destroyed by arson and then removed in 2015. Going through two iterations, the second and final variant of *Tęcza* comprised an 8-ton steel structure, 9 meters high, and 26 meters wide. It assumed the guise of a community artwork, as many people pitched in to decorate this rainbow structure with over 16 thousand ersatz flowers. With these rainbow-colored artificial flowers, the artist wished to create a universal symbol, evoking the rainbow's long history of positive associations. Wójcik wished to express values of beauty, joy, love, peace, hope, and optimism, adding that a rainbow isn't socially or politically involved, but free of imposed meanings. While the artist has acknowledged how *Tęcza* could be seen as referring, "movements on behalf of the emancipation of sexual minorities," the artist initially denied this connection. However, a large group of the religiously conservative, far-right, Polish public, as well as several conservative, Catholic political leaders, took umbrage with *Tęcza*. This large, hyper-visible public artwork was seen as association with the LGBTQIA+ Pride flag and read as homosexual propaganda. Despite strong levels of social

[47] Vallerand, "Home Is the Place We All Share," 65.

control in a lively city center, there were repeated arson attempts against this artwork, seven times in total. A notable arson attack was caused by far-right nationalists during National Independence Day demonstrations on November 11, 2013. This incident was followed by a kiss-in demonstration under the surviving remnants of the structure a few days later. Notwithstanding the sustained assaults, *Tęcza* was painstakingly renovated each time, with the moral support from leading figures, including activists, artists, and the then mayor, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, who conveyed that, "city authorities will rebuild the Rainbow many times, if necessary."[48] This amounted to five times total. Eventually, authorities removed the artwork when the temporary agreement between the City of Warsaw and its caretaker, Adam Mickiewicz Institute, terminated in August of 2015.[49]

Although not seen as a queer monument by the artist, a portion of the public viewed *Tęcza* as such, giving the work "queer potential." Becoming a major landmark, *Tęcza* simultaneously provoked positive and negative opinions. "Within the purview of the lack of a larger, widely shared political commitment to fight forms of sexual and gender prejudice and inequality in Poland, *Tęcza* became part of the struggle against LGBT+ phobia and bigotry. And so, it turned into a public 'conversation piece,' [a notion associated] with artworks driven by critical dialogue and antagonistic engagement."[50] The notion of conversation is consistently shared by most, if not all, queer and counter-monuments and will therefore be considered when discussing Gibson's *BOYEMHIBOH*.

BOYEMHIBOH, challenges traditional monuments by using strategies found in both queer and counter monuments. In the following section, I will discuss the five aspects of a

[48] Zebracki, Leitner, "Queer Monuments," 1353.
[49] Zebracki, Leitner, "Queer Monuments," 1352-53.
[50] Zebracki and Leitner, "Queer Monuments," 1354.

counter-monument: subject, form, site, visitor experience, and meaning. I will show how these five rubrics foreground how this work differs from the traditional monument and how they support identification as a counter-monument. Sharing aspects of the counter-monument, Gibson "queers" this work personally, while the work also holds "queer potential" for its viewing audience. As such, the work can be identified as a queer counter-monument.

Analysis and Results

Traditional monumental forms, such as Mount Rushmore, the Statue of Liberty, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, can be found throughout the United States. Made of hardy materials such as copper, steel, marble, and granite, these monuments were made to stand the test of time, generally unmoving. Gibson's *BOYEMHIBOH* is altogether quite different in its materials, shape, and colored surface. As stated, this work is a multi-tiered plywood structure adorned with a vibrant surface of wheat-pasted posters. Created with a steel armature on the interior, this work can hold hundreds of pounds per square inch.[51] Although a steel armature is a typical factor in many traditional monuments, as it can provide structural integrity, Gibson intentionally designed his work to hold the weight of those using it as a stage or Speaking Corner. The work was also designed to be easily disassembled, moved, and reassembled, allowing it to change locations. When asked if this work would ever have a permanent home, Gibson answered that he'd much rather have the work nomadically travel, accumulating meaning as it went. He went on to say that such a work could be important in how it could help decentralize cultural hubs.[52] In other words, pushing for our present society to allow

[51] Karen Rosenburg, "Artist Jeffrey Gibson on Making a More Inclusive Monument," Artful Jaunts, July 6, 2020, https://www.artfuljaunts.com/magazine/artist-jeffrey-gibson-on-making-a-more-inclusive -monument.

[52] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," YouTube (YouTube, January 22, 2021), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIZfGCOWcTQ&t=2669s, 56:03-56:34.

cultural opportunities and diversity to be easily seen everywhere, rather than be focused in population heavy locations, such as New York. By having an ever-changing monumental work that can travel the land, this could benefit our global community. The work would be an opportunity for peoples of all communities, both large and small, to learn about something new.

When looking at the physical shape of the work, it can best be described as a three-tiered, step pyramid form. Although similar in shape to the step pyramids of Egypt, for example the Step Pyramid of Djoser (fig. 7), Gibson is looking to reference the mound structures of the pre-Columbian civilization Cahokia, which are discussed in further depth later. Gibson at times also refers to the work as a ziggurat, which is defined by *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as, "an ancient Mesopotamian temple tower consisting of a lofty pyramidal structure built in successive stages with outside staircases and a shrine at the top." The work also resembles the *talud-tablero* architectural style found in the ancient Mesoamerican city Teotihuacan (fig. 30). By designing a work that resembles architecture seen across the globe, Gibson was able to create a work that could be recognized by many different peoples. In comparison with the architecture of the surrounding Manhattan high-rises, with their sky-high chrome exteriors and muted colors, Gibson's work stands apart as uniquely shaped and colorful (fig. 8).

Looking at the surface of the work, we can see how visually vibrant it is, compared to the darker, metallic colors of traditional monuments. Covered in psychedelic-like patterns, this work instantly captures the eye. Standing against the industrial backdrop of Manhattan, Socrates Sculpture Park as a green space, pops out. But to have this colorful, unique form within that space, an idea Gibson never truly considered until after the work was placed within Socrates Park, allowed the work to contrast tenfold visually.[53] The colorful design that wraps the surface

[53] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox,"11:32-12:37.

of this work consists of wheat-based posters, a product typically used for adhering paper posters and notices to walls. Given the nature of the material, these posters begin to fade as the work sits in the elements (fig. 9/10). Whether intended or not by Gibson, this allows the work to be revitalized, as the old posters can be covered with new ones. These new posters could differ in color and design as well, evoking a sense of growth and evolution as the work travels.

Site: Socrates Sculpture Park

Originally an abandoned riverside landfill and illegal dumpsite, in 1986 a coalition of artists and community members, under artist Mark di Suvero, transformed Socrates Sculpture Park into an open studio and exhibition space for artists. Today, the park is an internationally renowned outdoor museum and designated New York City public park dedicated to supporting artists in producing and presenting public work.[54] Located on Long Island in Queens, New York, the park is located on the northwest side of the island, sitting directly across the East River from Roosevelt Island, and beyond that, the Upper East Side of Manhattan. *BOYEMHIBOH* sat near the northern edge of the park, yards away from the riverside. Given its size and shape, the work could be seen by many people, whether in the park, riding in nearby boats, or sitting in high-rises across the river. For months it sat, dominating the park with its height and bright colors. Given the vicinity of nearby airports, in particular John F. Kennedy International located in Queens, the work could have even been seen by planes landing and taking off on nearby landing strips.[55] Save for some bushes along the edge of the river, and trees dotting the park, the work was left visually unobstructed. This differs from the locations of many traditional monuments, which although often located in parks and recreational areas, are often sequestered away in their own

[54] "Mission & History," Socrates Sculpture Park, accessed February 11, 2023, https://socratessculpturepark.org/about-us/mission-and-history/.

[55] John. F Kennedy International airport is approximately fourteen miles away from Socrates Sculpture Park. Newark Liberty International, thirty miles away. This information was found via Google Maps.

hidden alcoves or interior gardens. To have this work, already so different in shape and color, out in the open for all to see was not the norm.

Subject: Cahokia and The Great Serpent Mound

As stated previously, Jeffrey Gibson's *BOYEMHIBOH* takes inspiration from a multitude of things, allowing its meaning to be impactful for a multitude of people. The following section focuses on the the inspirations Gibson discovered in pre-Columbian Mississippian architecture, specifically the ancient metropolis of Cahokia. This section also discusses the geometric designs seen on the colorful wheat-paste posters of Gibson's work and how they were inspired by the Great Serpent Mound in Peebles, Ohio. Although the title of Gibson's work and its text are also relevant here, I will discuss them later in the section on visitor experience.

The metropolis of Cahokia, now known as the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, is located on the east side of modern-day St. Louis. The city lasted approximately five hundred years between 800 and 1300 CE.[56] Despite its given name, the original city wasn't built by the Cahokia tribe people, but by earlier Mississippians. The name Cahokia comes from a subtribe of Illini people who lived amid the Central and Upper Mississippi Valleys. In the mid-to-late 1600s, early French explorers encountered them and several other tribes in the surrounding regions and began naming local streams, towns, and some of the mounds after them.[57]

Teeming with fertile soil and wildlife, and located between two great rivers, rich with fish and other resources, Cahokia was an ideal location for a large populace to call its home.[58] Its main source of agriculture was the growing of maize, better known to many English speakers as

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[56] Claudia Mink, *Cahokia, City of the Sun*, 3rd printing and revision (Collinsville, IL: Cahokia Mounds Museum Society, 1992.), 5.

[57] Mink, *Cahokia, City of the Sun*, 67; David Hurst Thomas, "Chapter Thirteen, Cahokia, A.D. 800-1350, Mississippian Culture in East St Louis, Illinois." In *Exploring Native North America*. (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 152.

[58] Alice Beck Kehoe, "Cahokia, the Great City." (*OAH Magazine of History* Vol. 27, no. 4, 2013), 17.

corn.[59] There is ample evidence of large-scale construction projects, residential areas, open plazas, palisade walls, elite burials, and rare artifacts within the city.[60] Its residents also engaged in commerce with the surrounding regions, accessing them through the Mississippi River and beyond. They traded for copper from the upper Great Lakes, mica from the Southern Appalachians, and seashells from the Gulf of Mexico.[61] Given its central location to all the surrounding regions, it's highly possible that Cahokia acted as a center of commerce and trade.

Cahokia is considerably larger than any village or mound area of the time. A village is typically defined as having a population of 500-2,500 residents.[62] Cahokia at its zenith is thought to have had 20,000 residents.[63] Those studying the region believe that around 1100 C.E., the city would've been larger than London or Paris at the time.[64] At present, sixty-five mounds have survived abuse, flooding, robbery, and destruction by farmers and vandals.[65] It's believed that as many as one hundred and twenty mounds were once scattered throughout Cahokia; however, much of what once made up this great city has been flattened and plowed for farmland, as well as the creation of modern-day St. Louis. What caused so many people to congregate in one such area? Evidence corroborates that Cahokia was involved with people of great renown, such as influential religious or political figures, a chief, spiritual healer, or merely a renowned member of the elite. Because of this, it's believed a form of hierarchy was in place to support these

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[59] Mink, *Cahokia, City of the Sun*, 20.

[60] Thomas, "Chapter Thirteen," 152.

[61] Jarzombek Ching and Prakash. "1000 CE, Cahokia, Serpent Mound." Chapter. In *A Global History of Architecture*. (New York, NY: Wiley, 2007.), 336-337.

[62] Evers, Jeannie, and Emdash Editing, eds. "Village." National Geographic Education. National Geographic Society, December 19, 2022.

[63] Mink, *Cahokia, City of the Sun*, 4.

[64] Kehoe, "Cahokia the Great City," 20.

[65] David Gerwin and Jack Zevin. "Chapter Four, There Are Still Mysteries Out There, Investigating the Mound-Builder People of North America." Chapter. In *Teaching US History as Mystery*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 75.

figures. The burials of Mound 72 provide an example. The Mound 72 burials were filled with exotic manufactured goods, such as marine shell artifacts, copper, and mica. One of its mass graves contains more than fifty young women; a nearby burial contains four beheaded and be-handed males. At least one person in Mound 72, thought to be the paramount lord of Cahokia or a close relative, was laid to rest on a litter adorned with thousands of shell beads. Buried alongside this individual were the bodies of three men and women, probably retainers sacrificed as part of the mortuary ceremony. These burials, with its associated human sacrifices and funerary goods, signal the appearance of an elite whose superiority may have been supported by mythology and ideology.[66] Whether this person was a religious or political figure, chief, spiritual healer, member of the elite, or something else is unknown. However, it can be theorized that some form of a class system hierarchized the people of Cahokia to support these elevated figures. The amount of time and effort that went into creating the mound structures of this great city would've required the cooperation of a large body of people, that being the general population. Whether these people worked out of respect and reverence for their leaders, out of fear, or to simply be a part of the drama of the time is still unclear.

Cahokia was a metropolis. No matter how or by whom the city was run, does it remove the fact that Indigenous people had civilization before Europeans ever stepped foot onto what we now call American soil. The Cahokia people built a mound structure now known as Monks Mound, which is as high as a ten-story building and covers more than fourteen acres. This makes it the largest prehistoric structure in the Western hemisphere and as large as the Pyramid of Giza in Egypt at its base. Furthermore, unlike the pyramids of Egypt, which were constructed of stone,

[66] Thomas, "Chapter Thirteen," 159.

this platform mound was constructed almost entirely out of layers of basket-transported soil and clay. The mound is estimated to contain nearly twenty-two million cubic feet of earth.[67]

The Great Serpent Mound, listed online as Serpent Mound State Memorial, and the three burial mounds that make up its site, are internationally listed National Historic Landmarks in Adams County in Peebles, Ohio. The Great Serpent Mound is described as a mounded serpent crawling along a bluff overlooking Brush Creek in southwestern Ohio. In fully realized maps of the effigy, the serpent is seen swallowing an egg-shaped object, with a wishbone or frog shape placed above it (fig. 29). The largest of all effigy mounds in North America, this work stretches to 1,384 feet. The mound results from hundreds of thousands of baskets of yellow clay, and rich dark soil overlaying stones, marking the outline of this earthen serpent slithering westward.[68] Much like Cahokia, The Great Serpent Mound's reason for creation is currently under debate. For years, it was unknown when the work was even created. The work was first re-discovered by archeologists Ephraim George Squier and Edwin Hamilton Davis in 1846 while investigating reports of "a work of defense [sic] with bastions at regular intervals." Upon their arrival, Squier and Davis instead discovered a giant effigy mound shaped like a snake. The mound was not mentioned again until 1886 when Frederick W. Putnam returned to the mound, having first visited it in 1883, and noticed severe damage to the effigy. Putnam raised $5,880 by private subscription in Boston to purchase the mound in 1887. He spent the next three field seasons (1887-1889) excavating and researching the mound to see what he could discover while also looking to restore the mound as best he could.[69] In 1900, the mound was deeded to the State of

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[67] Mink, *Cahokia, City of the Sun*, 24-25.

[68] David Hurst Thomas, "Chapter Nine, Serpent Mound, A.D. 1000-1140, Fort Ancient Tradition in Ohio." Chapter. In *Exploring Native North America*. (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 106.

[69] Robert V. Fletcher, Terry L. Cameron, Bradley T. Lepper, Dee Anne Wymer, and William Pickard, "SERPENT MOUND: A FORT ANCIENT ICON?" In *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeolog*y 21, no. 1 (1996): 105-43. Accessed June 4, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20708387.

Ohio, stipulating that it be preserved and always open to the public. For years following Putnam's excavation and research, the mound was thought to have been built by the Adena people (800 BCE- 100 CE) because several burial mounds attributed to the Adena were nearby.[70] This evidence was entirely circumstantial, however, and more research was needed to prove this. In 1985, Robert V. Fletcher and his team were permitted to test the possibility that astronomical alignments might be found within the structure of the Serpent, which could provide further information as to when the mound was created. The team believed they could discover the date of the mounds' creation in a different way: by taking charcoal samples from the clay-ash layer found by Putnam and running them through radiocarbon dating. Permission to excavate and locate these samples was given in 1991, tests were enacted, and the results surprised everyone. The mound was found to have been made during the Late Prehistoric (Fort Ancient) period (1000-1750 CE), 1400 years later than initially suspected. This was further supported by the fact that the few artifacts that were found at the mound were of Fort Ancient origin.[71] For several years the consensus was that the Fort Ancient people had built the mound. However, in 2011, Edward W. Herrmann led a multidisciplinary excavation with carbon dating included. Herrmann's excavation indicated that the Adena culture had indeed created the mound; however, it was eventually abandoned, and degradation was allowed to occur. Fourteen hundred years later, the Fort Ancient people re-discovered and repaired the site, allowing evidence from all parties to be reconciled.[72]

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[70] Susan L. Woodward, and Jerry N. MacDonald, *Indian Mounds of the Middle Ohio Valley a Guide to Mounds and Earthworks of the Adena, Hopewell, Cole, and Fort Ancient People*. (McDonald & Woodward Pub. Co, 2002), 120.

[71] Fletcher, "SERPENT MOUND,"132-139; Edward W. Herrmann, G. William Monaghan, William F. Romain, Timothy M. Schilling, Jarrod Burks, Karen L. Leone, Matthew P. Purtill, and Alan C. Tonetti, "A New Multistage Construction Chronology for the Great Serpent Mound, USA." *Journal of Archaeological Science* 50 (July 2014): 119. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2014.07.004.

[72] Herrmann, "A New Multistage Construction Chronology for the Great Serpent Mound, USA," 121-124.

In recent studies by Bradley T. Lepper, arguments have been made stating that The Great Serpent Mound was indeed created by the Fort Ancient people, given that recent studies on radiocarbon dating have proven inaccurate, placing the dating completed at the mound into question.[73] Furthermore, the use of serpents in Adena art and iconography is highly unusual, in comparison to the Fort Ancient people who used it regularly.[74] Research shows that that the Western Mississippian region was a focal point for long-enduring religious traditions between 1050 and 1250 AD. Evidence for shared religious and ritual knowledge over a large part of eastern North America has been key to defining what is now referred to as the Mississippian Ideological Interaction Sphere.[75] Core elements of interacting, yet regionally distinctive, belief systems remained surprisingly steady over time; and it's believed that the meaning of The Great Serpent Mound and corresponding glyphs from Picture Cave in Warrenton, Missouri may be found in the oral traditions of groups whose ancestors were a part of that interaction sphere. Picture Cave is thought to have been designed and used by the Dhegihans, ancestors of the modern-day Quapaw, Osage, Kansas, Ponca, and Omaha tribes.[76] The Dhegihans were but one of many tribes that would have made up the regions of Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi.

When comparing the iconography of The Great Serpent Mound with Picture Cave in Warrenton, Missouri, there are three glyphs within the cave that bear striking resemblance to that of the mound. These glyphs are that of a serpent, a frog or humanoid female, and a bi convex

[73] Bradley T. Lepper, "Why Radiocarbon Dates on Bulk Sediments from Serpent Mound Are Problematic," *Current Research in Ohio Archeology,* 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348199662, _Why_Radiocarbon_Dates_on_Bulk_Sediment_from_Serpent_Mound_Are_Problematic.

[74] Bradley T. Lepper, Tod A. Frolking, and William H. Pickard, "Debating the Age of Serpent Mound: A Reply to Romain and Herrmann's Rejoinder to Lepper Concerning Serpent Mound," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 44, no. 1 (August 10, 2018): 42-56, https://doi.org/10.1080/01461109.2018.1507806, 10;

Bradley T. Lepper et al., "Arguments for the Age of Serpent Mound," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 28, no. 3 (2018): 433-450, https://doi.org/10.1017/s095977431800001x, 9-10.

[75] Lepper, "Arguments for the Age of Serpent Mound," 13.

[76] Lepper, "Arguments for the Age of Serpent Mound," 13.

shape.[77] The serpent represents The Great Serpent, lord of Beneath World, chief of the Water Spirits, and father of snakes. The frog or humanoid female figure is the First Woman, and creator of Middle World for all living things, and the bi convex shape is the vulva of the First Woman.[78] When viewing the Great Serpent Mound in this light, the serpent effigy would be the Lord of the Beneath World, the frog would be First Woman with spread legs in a coital position, and the egg would be the First Woman's symbolically enlarged vulva.[79] These symbols together tell a portion of a coherent narrative of what we believe to be the essential elements of the genesis story of the Dhegiha, the *Mo*^{n}*-Thi*^{n}*-Ka-Ga'-Xe*, also known as *The Making of the Earth Rite*.[80]

Studies have shown that a portion of the serpent's body is congruent with the shape of the Little Dipper, and that the movement apparent in the serpent's tail reflects the progress of the constellation around the North Star.[81] Yet recent studies, as mentioned above, link this earthwork to the creation myths of past Indigenous peoples. Regardless of why it was created, The Great Serpent Mound is like Cahokia an astounding example of past Indigenous people's capabilities.

Using Cahokia and the Great Serpent Mound as inspiration for his work, Gibson gave opportunities for the public to learn about peoples and histories of which they might not be aware of. Discussing these civilizations, Gibson undercuts the inaccurate or simply ignored histories and perceptions of past Indigenous peoples, which are so often found in public education and academia still today. Shedding light on Cahokia and the Great Serpents Mound, Gibson can highlight, rewrite, and remember the history of a peoples often forgotten by a Euro-American

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[77] Lepper, "Arguments for the Age of Serpent Mound," 10.
[78] Lepper, "Arguments for the Age of Serpent Mound," 10.
[79] Lepper, "Arguments for the Age of Serpent Mound," 10.
[80] Lepper, "Arguments for the Age of Serpent Mound," 14.
A brief retelling of the *Mo*^{n}*-Thi*^{n}*-Ka-Ga'-Xe* can be found in Appendix I.
[81] Thomas, "Chapter Nine," 107.

audience. This is a key reason Jeffrey Gibson selected these locations as inspiration for his work. In an interview with Socrates Sculpture Park curator Jess Wilcox, Gibson explains:

> [In my undergrad at the Art Institute of Chicago, I had the opportunity to work as a research assistant, for the Field Museum also located in Chicago, [as part of] the Native American Graves Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). [This act allows federally recognized tribes] to request repatriation of objects [under certain guidelines]. [It was here that I was introduced to Mississippian culture, outside of what I had learned in my childhood]. [Growing up, many of the Southeastern tribes such as the Choctaw weren't] represented in museums. So, when I thought of Choctaw people, it was always my family. [Mississippian culture] was interesting [as it introduced me to] a pre-Columbian history where the Mississippi Choctaw would have emerged from… [I was blown away that many major art schools and universities, like the Art Institute of Chicago, didn't discuss these examples of art and architecture that existed on this continent, and the achievements of these people], and civilizations pre-contact… Modernity happened for Indigenous people long before [European contact]. [It shifted what I think modernism is], what I think invention is, [and when did modernity happen] for different cultures? [It broke up these ideas for me] in a way [that allowed space for creative thinking.][82]

Gibson expounds on an idea of personal creative freedom when taking inspiration from these locations. As an artist, Gibson gave himself the liberty to invent, innovate, and re-design creatively what could already be found within Cahokia and the Great Serpent Mound.[83] In an interview with Jess Wilcox, Gibson states, "I feel very proud to say [I'm picking up] from these things and continuing, not necessarily to make work in honor [of these places, but that] they gave me permission to continue making, with the assumption that there is meaning in [the] content I'm making."[84] Looking at The Great Serpent Mound, Gibson notes how he used this site as inspiration for the psychedelic, wheat-pasted posters that adorn the surface of his work. Using the language of color and a graphic style, Gibson creates posters (fig. 11) that reflect an abstracted view of the curvature in the body of the serpent (fig. 12).[85] Much of Gibson's work, this piece included, is done in a maximalist style, as to reflect the "numbness" that Indigenous

[82] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 4:50-8:18.
[83] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 9:10-9:37.
[84] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 9:37-9:55.
[85] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 9:58-10:17.

people, queer people, and people of color undergo to live in our society. For centuries, these people have endured abuse, racism, and more, yet they've been encouraged to assimilate and live, "numbing themselves," in this modern-day United States as if the atrocities of the past have left them unaffected, and that this United States is a land of freedom and true equality. Yet if we truly reflect on modern day politics and history, these people continue to face acts of inequality and abuse, to their physical selves, and to their land. One example of this lies in the continuing controversy of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which shall be spoken of in a later section.[86] Gibson looks to counteract this "numbness" by creating work that "makes [us] feel it."[87] In other words Gibson creates works that serve as a call to action, whether that be a physical one, or simply a call one's feelings to be present. Although unthought of by Gibson until the piece was completed and installed at Socrates Sculpture Park, the work is a literal pop of color in the gray landscape that makes up a majority of the city of Manhattan (fig. 8).[88] This enhances an idea Jess Wilcox mentions in her interview with Gibson, "[of a work] pushing ideas into the eyes of the people in an often spectacular way.[89]

The body of the Gibson's structure is inspired by the earth-mound architecture that made up much of the Cahokia metropolis (fig. 13 and 8). The mounds of Cahokia typically came in three forms: flat-topped pyramids called temple or platform mounds; conical mounds; and linear ridgetop mounds (fig. 14). Many of the mounds at Cahokia would have been platform shaped.[90] Gibson's work aligns with that of a platform mound, and, most notably, with Monks Mound

[86] Su T. Fitterman, "The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL)," Environmental & Energy Law Program (Harvard Law School, February 28, 2023), https://eelp.law.harvard.edu/2017/10/dakota-access-pipeline/.

[87] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 10:20-11:15.

[88] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 12:14-12:37.

[89] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 11:45-12:00.

[90] Mink, *Cahokia, City of the Sun*, 35-36.

itself, in terms of its shape. During his interview with Jess Wilcox, Gibson shows an artistic depiction of what Monks Mound may have looked like in the past, as well as a present day photograph of the mound when describing Cahokia architecture as inspiration for this work.[91] Gibson highlights how he looked specifically to Cahokia for inspiration in this piece, despite the fact that his ancestral tribe, the Mississippi Choctaw people, have their own place of origin called Nanih Waiya. Gibson chose Cahokia because it was a city and culture that spanned many current U.S. states.[92] As in much of his work, here Gibson is looking to connect with as many people as he can, so choosing a form from Cahokia that was recognizable in its shape was ideal. Although not mentioned in his interview with Wilcox, it should also be noted how similar the work is in comparison to various step pyramid structures around the world. One only has to look at the Pyramids of Giza, the Great Pyramid of Cholula and El Castillo in Mexico, and the Borobudur Buddhist monument in Central Java, to realize that mound and step pyramid architecture is a style common to many cultures around the world (fig. 15/16/17/18).

At 44 x 44 x 21 feet tall and with Cahokia's largest mound being 951 x 835 x 100 feet tall, the size of *BOYEMHIBOH* is considerably smaller than some of the mounds at Cahokia. However, this difference in size doesn't contradict the fact that Gibson's work still manages to tower above human scale. The work is so large, one is forced to circumnavigate it if they wish to view it in its entirety. Prolonged walking, coupled with the different slogans that adorn all four sides of the work, pushes one to consider the work and its words for an extended period, considering the monumental nature of this work, and those works that inspired it.[93]

[91] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 6:05-8:20.
[92] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 6:58-7:30.
[93] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 13:30-13:53.

Circumambulation provides a good transition to the third aspect of a counter-monument: the visitor experience.

Visitor Experience: Title, Performances, and Text

As noted above, Jeffrey Gibson created the structure of *BOYEMHIBOH*, with the intention of allowing other artists to use the work as a stage or Speakers' Corner. Therefore, the following section is dedicated to the title, the above-mentioned performances, and the text that covers the work. I do so as they all pertain directly to the viewing audience, who would read and consider the title and texts of the work, watch the performances either live or in a recorded format, and interact with the art and artist in other visitor-based programming.

Visitor Experience: Title

The title of this work, *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House*, comes from the song, *Can You Feel It*, from the 1986 EP *Washing Machine*, written and produced by Mr. Fingers (Larry Heard), and recorded at Trax Records in Chicago, Illinois.[94] When speaking about the title of this work Gibson refers to the lyrics, "What is it that Jack does?…Jack is the one that can bring nations and nations of all Jackers together, under one house. You may be black, you may be white, you may be Jew or Gentile. It don't make a difference in our house, and this is fresh."[95] For Gibson, this song was an anthem that allowed him to think that the world could be a different and better place.[96] In an excerpt from deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum's website, Gibson's speaks further on how this work evokes "80s and 90s-era house music and nightclubs, as they provided welcoming spaces for queer communities, and people of

[94] "Mr. Fingers - Washing Machine / Can You Feel It," Discogs, January 1, 1986, https://www.discogs.com/release/1948-Mr-Fingers-Washing-Machine-Can-You-Feel-It.

[95] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 44:47-45:14.

[96] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 45:14-45:27.

color. Mr. Finger's lyrics embrace intimacy, generosity, acceptance, and community. This installation echoes [a] broad communal ethos as Gibson invited fellow Indigenous artists… to co-create the wheat-pasted posters covering the façade of the installation, and [stage] performances on and around the [this sculpture]."[97] This work's title serves as a welcome message, inviting those to come in, interact with the work, view the performances, and be part of this intimate, open, and welcoming community.

Visitor Experience: Performances

Gibson's *BOYEMHIBOH* can act as a stage or Speakers Corner. The architectural structure's large size, multiple levels, and hollow interior mean that a variety of different performances could be enacted in and around its surface. With Gibson's desire for other artists to interact with his work, the work is activated in new and different ways, growing beyond its original value and meaning. Gibson looked to produce something that reflected his view of what it means to be Indigenous, or what it means to acknowledge these histories, but he knew it would be inappropriate if only he were to speak on behalf of other Indigenous artists and people.[98] Early on, Gibson decided to design this structure with the intention that its meaning would grow and accumulate with each iteration.[99] Without an exact meaning the work would grow, as those who decided to perform and interact with the work, would evoke and evolve the true meaning of the piece as it traveled.[100] When asked if he prompted the other artists towards any particular

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[97] "Jeffrey Gibson: Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House," The Trustees of Reservations, July 15, 2021, https://thetrustees.org/content/because-once-you-enter-my-house-it-becomes-our-house/.

Gibson has referenced the Mr. Fingers *Can You Feel It* in various other works such as *Make Me Feel It* (2015).

[98] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 19:26-19:45.

[99] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 19:45-19:56.

[100] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 20:27-20-46.

form of performance, Gibson answered "no," out of respect for their craft and experience, and wanting the other artists to feel unrestricted as they worked and interacted with the structure.[101]

As of this writing, six performances have been created on, within, or around Gibson's *BOYEMHIBOH*.[102] Four were enacted at Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens: a live and recorded Land Acknowledgement by Indigenous Kinship Collective (IKC); a live and recorded musical performance by Laura Ortman (White Mountain Apache); a live and recorded dance performance, *The Ways We Love and The Ways We Love Better – Monumental Movement Toward Being Future Being(s)* by Emily Johnson (Yup'ik) and company; and finally a recorded dance and musical performance created through the collaboration of Gibson, DJ and multimedia performer MX Oops, and composer, musician and artist Raven Chacon (Diné-American), titled *A Warm Darkness*. *A Warm Darkness* was to be broadcast and recorded via live stream; however, due to technical difficulties, the virtual event was canceled. The performance was eventually captured in a high-production-value documentary film, but is currently unavailable for public viewing online, despite promises from Socrates that the performance would be distributed freely on their website and YouTube channel.[103] However, as a recording of the performance was

[101] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Jeffrey Gibson, Laura Ortman, Emily Johnson, and Raven Chacon." YouTube. YouTube, March 4, 2021, Recorded Zoom Interview, 56:16-57:16.

[102] The two most recent performances seen on Gibson's work are a performance piece by Eric-Paul Riege (Diné) using movement, sound, and soft sculptures draped in and outside Gibson's work, and a dance performance piece by Luzene Hill and company (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians) using a silver, reflective material that covers them and a portion of Gibson's work. Both performances were enacted at deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, Massachusetts, after Gibson's work relocate there in June 2021. As this thesis focuses on Gibson's work at its original location in Socrates Sculpture Park, these two performances are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, pictures of these individual performances are found on the artists' websites.

"Eric-Paul Riege," Tumblr, accessed February 19, 2023, https://ericpaulriege.com/oOo; Luzene Hill, "Installations - Performance/Activations," luzene hill, accessed February 19, 2023, http://www.luzenehill.com/performanceactivations.

[103] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Canceled: Raven Chacon Performance Live-Stream." Socrates Sculpture Park. Accessed October 9, 2021. https://socratessculpturepark.org/program/chacon-performance/.

on view in Gibson's recent exhibition *Jeffrey Gibson: The Body* Electric, I will briefly analyze it below.

The following section discusses the performances that were completed atop Jeffrey Gibson's work *BOYEMHIBOH* at Socrates Sculpture Park. I address each work in chronological order: a Land Acknowledgement by Indigenous Kinship Collective, a musical performance by Laura Ortman, a dance performance by Emily Johnson and company, and finally, *A Warm Darkness,* the collaboration between Jeffrey Gibson, MX Oops, and Raven Chacon.[104]

Indigenous Kinship Collective performed a Land Acknowledgement atop Gibson's work on July 24, 2020. Indigenous Kinship Collective (IKC) (fig. 19), is a group of Indigenous Womxn, Femmes, and Gender Non-Conforming folx.[105] Land acknowledgment as defined by Northwestern University is:

> A formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories… To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long-standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgments do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present

[104] I would encourage those who are reading this, to view each performance on YouTube or Socrates Sculpture Park's website, as we move through our analysis of each individual performance.

[105] Socrates Sculpture Park, "IKC's Land Acknowledgment atop Jeffrey Gibson's Monument at Socrates." YouTube. YouTube, January 6, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdxIpL9RoKE;

The mission of IKC is, "[To be a] community of Indigenous womxn, femmes, and gender non-conforming folx who gather on Lenni Lenape land to honor each other and our relatives through art, activism, education, and representation. We, as matriarchs and knowledge keepers, center our intersectional narratives by practicing accountability with community and self-determination. We uplift intergenerational Indigenous voices and welcome mixed race, non-enrolled, Indigenous femme, non-binary, trans, two-spirit people. We denounce colonial power structures of leadership and blood quantum. We are circular and work in harmony with each other. We are defined by those who came before us."

Indigenous Kinship Collective. Accessed October 9, 2021. https://indigenouskinshipcollective.com/.

Folx (pronounced folks) is defined by *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as, "[a word] used especially to explicitly signal the inclusion of groups commonly," and by *Cambridge Dictionary* as, "[a word that] emphasizes the fact that you intend the word to include all groups of people…folx is meant to be a gender-neutral word that includes members of the LGBTQ community."

> participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol.[106]

The Land Acknowledgement heard from IKC is much more than a mere statement of recognition and respect, however. Throughout the performance, the speaker is upset and very angry about the current social and political climate that permeates United States culture at this time. They speak on how Lenapehoking, what we now know as New York City, is the land of Lenape people and that of many other Indigenous peoples. As defined by the *Lenape Center* website,

> "Lenapehoking is the Lenape name for Lenape land, which spans from Western Connecticut to Eastern Pennsylvania, and the Hudson Valley to Delaware, with Manhattan at its center. Due to centuries of colonialism perpetuated by genocide, forced displacement, and systemic oppression, today the Lenape Diaspora is dispersed throughout the U.S. and Canada, which includes five federally recognized nations in Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Ontario."[107]

The Lenape, Carnarsee, Munsee, Shinnecock, Rockaway, Ronkonkoma, Mohawk, and many others originally called New York City their home.[108] Through genocide, forced displacement, rape, disease, and assimilation was it taken from them. As described by the IKC speaker, it was Indigenous people who built New York City, and it was stolen people from Africa who shaped this country.[109] They also say that Indigenous peoples are not in a post-colonial society, but in a present settlers' society that continues to engage in acts of genocide against Indigenous women, girls, trans, two-spirit, and African Americans, among others.[110] The speaker activates Gibson's structure by reciting some of the text seen on the work—"IN NUMBERS TOO BIG TO IGNORE" —multiple times throughout the Land Acknowledgement, while also unrolling a

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[106] Northwestern University, ed., "Native American and Indigenous Initiatives." Land Acknowledgment: Native American and Indigenous Initiatives - Northwestern University. Accessed October 9, 2021. https://www.northwestern.edu/native-american-and-indigenous-peoples/about/Land%20Acknowledgement.html.

[107] "Lenapehoking," Lenape Center, December 3, 2021, https://thelenapecenter.com/lenapehoking/.

[108] Socrates Sculpture Park, "IKC's Land Acknowledgment atop Jeffrey Gibson's Monument at Socrates," 00:22-00:45.

[109] Socrates Sculpture Park, "IKC's Land Acknowledgment," 00:45-01:19.

[110] Socrates Sculpture Park, "IKC's Land Acknowledgment," 00:14-03:11.

banner which reads “NOT INVISIBLE, MMIWG2ST.” This acronym stands for “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, and Trans Folks” a mass movement in Canada and the United States. These two phrases recognize the numerous Indigenous women, girls, transgender, and two spirit people who have gone missing, only later to be found murdered.[111] IKC’s performance looks to recognize those oppressed before us, but to also call out those who continue to oppress African Americans and Indigenous peoples to this day. Jeffrey Gibson, in an interview with the other artists who performed on his work, recognized the significance of this Land Acknowledgement as being more than its original definition. He speaks about how Land Acknowledgments are, in many ways, an admittance of guilt. Yes, there are those before us who stole Indigenous land. Still, if we continue to live on this land without looking to provide opportunities for those from whom it was stolen, we are perpetuating a similar situation. Land acknowledgments are not a solution; they are a way of expressing that there’s a problem. From there, a solution still needs to be found. Gibson expresses that although we may not have an immediate solution yet, beginning to establish strong relationships with Indigenous peoples within our communities is a great first step.[112] One of the performing artists, Emily Johnson, recognizes this further by speaking on how we should look to establish relationships with Lenape people and providing them with opportunities to re-establish themselves on their ancestral land if they choose to do so.[113] We are unable to change the mistakes of the past; however, we can fix the mistakes of the present and recognize those who struggled before us.

[111] Socrates Sculpture Park, “IKC's Land Acknowledgment,” 01:57-02:25.

[112] Socrates Sculpture Park. “In Conversation: Jeffrey Gibson, Laura Ortman, Emily Johnson, and Raven Chacon,” 1:01:24-1:03:04.

[113] Socrates Sculpture Park, “In Conversation: Jeffrey Gibson, Laura Ortman, Emily Johnson, and Raven Chacon,” 59:19-1:01:18.

Acclaimed violinist Laura Ortman drew inspiration from Socrates' location on the East River as well as the historic Cahokia mounds for an improvised, four movement performance inside and atop Gibson's work (fig. 20).[114] This performance followed IKC's Land Acknowledgment on July 24, 2020.[115] Through her performance, Ortman was able to activate the structure of Gibson's work through her music, helping it transcend beyond a massive, silent object. Much of this is due, in part, to the fact that Ortman produced sounds from within the structure itself and include it in the music she was creating. The first movement begins with Ortman and an unnamed woman inside the interior of Gibson's work. As Ortman walks the structure's interior, she bangs a crowbar and wind chime pole along the scaffolding of the work.[116] As she does this, the other woman drags a metal pole along one of the structure supports, creating a droning sound that fills the space.[117] Although most of the performance takes place outside the ziggurat, I believe this woman either stayed within the structure's interior to continuously produce this sound, or the sound was recorded and played on a loop throughout the rest of the performance. Regardless, their actions allowed the structure to be a tangible part of Ortman's set, auditorily, throughout the performance. Exiting the interior of the structure in the second movement Ortman, using both her violin and sound system, produced sounds akin to screaming; a cacophony of sound.[118] The constant droning sound from within the structure, created sounds reminiscent of people crying out in pain. Ortman's performance immediately

[114] Socrates Sculpture Park, "For Immediate Release." Socrates Sculpture Park. Accessed October 9, 2021. https://socratessculpturepark.org/gibson-screenings-pr/.

[115] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Laura Ortman Performs atop Jeffrey Gibson's Monument Installation at Socrates." YouTube. YouTube, February 3, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuzPspTqCwo&t=286s, 0:20.

[116] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Jeffrey Gibson, Laura Ortman, Emily Johnson, and Raven Chacon," 50:20-51:25.

[117] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Laura Ortman Performs," 1:42-3:35.

[118] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Laura Ortman Performs," 3:36-14:20.

followed the message heard by IKC, and Ortman capitalized on that context to manifest feelings of either anger, horror, sadness, or a combination of the three, throughout her performance.

In the third movement of the performance, we are met with something entirely different. Ortman begins using a set of wind chimes to produce a tinkling sound, which is enveloped by the wind blowing off the nearby East River.[119] In a sense, a brief reprieve is given following what we just heard. Ortman begins playing on her violin again, only this time, we're met with calming notes, which sound like singing.[120] Ortman's music here reflects the movement of the nearby river, how it ebbs and flows with the current. In some areas, the water will seem like an endless torrent of rushing water, while in others, it will be as still as glass. The fourth and final movement of the piece appears ritualistic in nature. Using a megaphone, Ortman begins to make kissing sounds that are coupled with the windchimes and an electrical drumming sound that underlies everything else.[121] In an almost humorous fashion, we are left with a feeling of love, happiness, and better things to come, as if the river itself is covering us with kisses.

Emily Johnson collaborated with Gibson to create a new original dance work titled, *The Ways We Love and The Ways We Love Better – Monumental Movement Toward Being Future Being(s)*, which utilized storytelling, invocation, and movement to illuminate Indigenous presence and histories held in Socrates Sculpture Park and New York City as a whole (fig. 21). Performers wore garments and masks designed by Gibson, who stated, "Emily's performance is fully sensory storytelling that connected her ancestral background to her experience arriving at and living in New York City."[122] The performance began September 16, 2020, at a sandy little

[119] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Laura Ortman Performs," 14:25-16:35.
[120] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Laura Ortman Performs," 16:35-29:15.
[121] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Laura Ortman Performs," 29:30-35:30.
[122] Socrates Sculpture Park, "For Immediate Release." Socrates Sculpture Park. Accessed October 9, 2021. https://socratessculpturepark.org/gibson-screenings-pr/.

cove down by the East River of Manhattan, easily within walking distance of Socrates Sculpture Park and Gibson's work. The performance begins with the company introducing themselves, giving their preferred pronouns, stating where they originate from and where they live today. They also made sure to include the names of ancestors and tribes they originated from, and who originally lived on the land they live upon today.[123] Following this, artist and dancer Emily Johnson introduced herself, giving her origins while shuffling her feet in a rhythmic motion. She welcomed all who chose to attend the performance, taking time to share gifts of black corn kernel seeds from her friend, Nataneh Rivers of the Lenape people.[124] Rivers is important, as she later contributes to the performance by providing written words for Johnson to read to the audience. The giving of these kernels is a means of spreading awareness of the Lenape people, as well as other Indigenous people, who have been removed from their land into diaspora. It also allows the audience to make connections with these people, and to help give back to them through donations of the corn they can now grow in the future. "This is their food," Johnson stated, "and this is their land."[125] Johnson goes on to make connections with the East River, speaking of how this river is simply a part of the large body of water that makes up the entire Earth. She uses this as a visual reference to connect us all while at the same time she is connecting with her ancestors. She speaks of how her great-great-grandmother gave birth in a kayak far to the northwest, and how despite the physical distance between them, including the distance of time, they're still connected through the water that connects us all.[126] At this point

[123] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Emily Johnson's Collaboration with Jeffrey Gibson at Socrates." YouTube. YouTube, February 17, 2021, 0:00-8:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJAmqdMnFCk&t=2209s.

[124] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Emily Johnson's Collaboration," 8:35-12:40.

[125] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Emily Johnson's Collaboration," 12:37.

[126] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Emily Johnson's Collaboration," 12:40-19:40.

Johnson, the dance company, and the audience make their way to Gibson's work, carrying these corn kernel seeds, as well as tobacco plants that will be planted at the end of the performance.

The dance performance begins with two women circumnavigating the structure as they dance, followed by others in the company clapping rhythmically.[127] These claps reverberate off the structure, activating it with sound, an idea that shall be repeated throughout the performance. The twelve dancers climb the three levels of the structure, circumnavigating it as a group. This gives way to shouts of "Hey, hey hey!" followed by rhythmic stomping. This causes the structure to shake with sound. As noted by Johnson in her interview with Gibson and the other performing artists, a key dance move is seen here. It's described as a low, deep, stomping squat, and in it, the dancers are visualizing pulling the ground of the structure, or the land itself, up to meet the soles of their feet. We see here both a physical connection and a connection of energies and histories.[128] Following this rhythmic stomping, we see some independent dancing done by the group, followed again by a circling of the structure, and in tandem, rhythmic stomping. At this time, Johnson climbs the structure, dancing with the company as she goes. As they begin to peel away, Johnson continues dancing alone while speaking with the audience.

Whether intentional or not, Johnson's breathing is very loud throughout the rest of the performance at this point, as she's seen wearing a headset microphone. This, in many ways, contributes to the energy and levels of emotion felt and seen throughout the performance. As she dances, Johnson asks the audience to promise her something: "to plant the corn, to close the prisons, and to return our (Lenape/Indigenous people's) land."[129] Following this, Johnson and

[127] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Emily Johnson's Collaboration," 20:30-26:08.

[128] Socrates Sculpture Park. "In Conversation: Jeffrey Gibson, Laura Ortman, Emily Johnson, and Raven Chacon,", 35:30-37:20.

[129] Socrates Sculpture Park. "Emily Johnson's Collaboration," 30:50-35:40.

her fellow company members take a seat on the structure as Johnson reads an Invocation given to her by her Lenape friend Nataneh River. It reads as follows:

> Lenape existence here is fractured, and as they try to frack in this Lenape Sipu, this Delaware River, they dig their hands into poisoned soil, attempting to drag out and cut our arteries. They have always used blood against blood. Such violence is the breadth of mourning for Lenepeyok…They say we have abandonment issues from our fathers, and our fathers' fathers. But what about our separation from our mother, that genderless matriarch who whispers our whims to us in our sleep? The first time I came home, I ran to the ocean, starving to float, be held by my mama. Chemicals, waste. Let me drown with her because we are of flesh the same. And sometimes it feels we'll be safer in the next life anyway, but these silly men can't actually kill my mother. And one day, if they don't stop, she will rise up, swallow them whole. I'll go with them and live with her in new form. I am not scared of what white people call death, only this life. And my mind in layered reality does not mean I do not hold responsibility. Responsibility to put out oil fires and sing seeds alive. Hope for a Black and Red return. I ask again and again, why did that white foam wash against these shores. Us Lenapeyok, the roots who call us home. We deserve a place here. As you plant these seeds and prepare a gift for those who have given you more than you can imagine. As you can plant these seeds and prepare a gift for those who have given you more than you can imagine, you do the labor of our hands. As you plant these seeds and prepare a gift for those who have given you more than you can imagine, you do the labor of our hands. You shape physically what we do spiritually…I pray you become land based. I pray you think about this land as much as my bones do. I pray you read about us. I pray you bring my Elders home. I pray you take on a responsibility us Lenapeyok can only dream of having this city, built on money and lies, severed heads and enslaved bones, white death, apocalypse to stand against this city, sit against this city, sleep against this city, speak against this city is to birth life.[130]

This is a message of longing for home, hope, family, and comfort. Yet it's also one of great strengths, of someone who is unafraid of death. It is not death that frightens but what this life may hold. It's a message of responsibility to care for this land. It's a message from the people that once called it home to those who now do. It is a message of prayer and pleading, for one to take responsibility for where one lives, and to seek retribution for the actions of those before us, and for the actions of what is being done, or not being done, now. The performance ends through an act of caring for the land. As Johnson continues to dance, saying the names of company

[130] Socrates Sculpture Park, "Emily Johnson's Collaboration," 35:55-42:00.

members that she loves and had the opportunity to work with, those company members exit the stage. They carry lights to help encourage audience members to plant the previously gifted tobacco plants in the garden of Socrates Sculpture Park, where they'll hopefully continue to reside and grow for months to come. Such plantings serve as a symbol and reminder of the start of new relationships between peoples, both within and outside of Indigenous communities.

As mentioned above, Jeffrey Gibson and composer and musician Raven Chacon (Diné-American) were to have performed together, but the event was canceled due to technical difficulties. However, later collaborations between Gibson, DJ and multimedia performer MX Oops, and Raven Chacon took place. They created documentary and music video work titled, *A Warm Darkness*. This work is not fully available to the public online. However, a small segment of raw footage posted by MX Oops, is available for viewing on *vimeo.com*.[131]

I had the privilege of viewing the final version of this work at the SITE Santa Fe solo exhibition, *Jeffrey Gibson: The Body Electric*. Gibson describes *A Warm Darkness* as a work that, "playfully embraces darkness and the intimacy of solitude. Mx. Oops, clad in hot pink, dances to Chacon's drone beats in a solitary rave inside the sculpture (fig. 22). As the sun sets, a group of youths shrouds the structure in black cloth, and it disappears into the night. Embraced by a comforting and secure darkness, Mx. Oops continues dancing inside, privately and for themselves. Inspired by science fiction and Indigenous world views, the film examines the intimacy of a party for one and the role of the audience."[132]

In terms of audio, this work, as well as Ortman and Johnson's performances activate the hollow interior of the structure, creating reverberations and echoes through the sound and music

[131] MX Oops, raw footage from *A Warm Darkness*, directed by Jeffrey Gibson, performed by MX Oops, music scored by Raven Chacon (2021), *Vimeo*, 2023, https://vimeo.com/646480177.

[132] "The Body Electric Gallery Guide," SITE Santa Fe, June 7, 2022, https://sitesantafe.org/the-body-electric-gallery-guide/.

created. For Ortman and the *A Warm Darkness* performance, the artists used the interior of the structure privately, dancing and creating music in isolation. The only reason we are seeing these interior performances is through recording, which allows an opportunity for post-production editing to occur. We see this especially take place in *A Warm Darkness*. This idea of isolation occurs throughout *A Warm Darkness* in multiple ways; through MX Oops dancing alone, the continuous beat of the same rhythm throughout the performance, and the shrouding of Gibson's structure in black cloth, further concealing the music and performance taking place within. In many ways, this performance reflects experiences of raves often attended by the public. A rave as defined by *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* is, "a large overnight dance party featuring techno music and usually involving the taking of mind-altering drugs." Raves, unless organized as part of a larger, public music festival, often make use of unauthorized, secret venues such as unoccupied homes, unused warehouses, or aircraft hangers. Given the anonymity of rave culture, these events were a chance for people to dance, be loud, and let loose without fear of being seen. However, given that this performance was recorded, we, the viewing audience, can peer into this intimate moment of solitary dancing. This performance reflects Gibson's feelings and experiences with dance and club culture as he grew up. In a written interview led by Jen Mergel, Gibson says, "I fell in love with club dancing at age thirteen in Korea. Back in the States at age fifteen, I was underage for nightclubs but continued to go…[this] became one of the places I could see individuality and freedom of expression encouraged and celebrated."[133] It was in these locations that Gibson was likely introduced to much of the music that inspires his work today, as well as given him the opportunity to explore his sexual identity. As described in Anne Ellegood's essay *Jeffrey Gibson: Critical Exuberance*, "[for many young people raves, clubs,] and other

[133] Gibson and Mergel, "'The Human Noise We Sat There Making," 106.

cultural forms of physical expression allow for sense of intimacy with the self and others. It is in these active moments of acute presentness that one can feel not only remarkably free, but also profoundly one's self."[134]

Visitor Experience: Texts

While Gibson's portfolio is extensive and made up of many different mediums, much of his work uses text. These texts stem from various sources such as poetry, song lyrics, and political/activist slogans. Gibson's choice of text, regardless of the origin of the text, is dynamic in its openness to multiple interpretations. This openness arguably helps Gibson's work reach a broader audience. When *BOYEMHIBOH* moved from Socrates Sculpture Park to deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, newly designed wheat-pasted posters, created in collaboration with other Indigenous artists Eric-Paul Riege (Diné), Luzene Hill (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians), and Dana Claxton (Hunkpapa Lakota), were applied to the exterior surface of the work.[135] However, the initial text that Gibson selected for the four sides of the work remained the same. As discussed below, Gibson chose these texts to operate as activist slogans, despite their varying origins. *BOYEMHIBOH* has four sides, each providing space for a different text. They read as; IN NUMBERS TOO BIG TO IGNORE (fig. 23), RESPECT INDIGENOUS LAND (fig. 9), POWERFUL BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT (fig. 10), and THE FUTURE IS PRESENT (fig. 24). Gibson selected texts to implicate the viewer, allowing for open interpretations. However, as seen in a few of his examples, a more direct choice of words was often necessary to get specific messages across.[136]

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[134] Anne Ellegood, "Jeffrey Gibson," 87.

[135] "Jeffrey Gibson: Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House," The Trustees of Reservations, July 15, 2021, https://thetrustees.org/content/because-once-you-enter-my-house-it-becomes-our-house/.

[136] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 23:08-23:40.

Looking first at, IN NUMBERS TOO BIG TO IGNORE, Gibson states that these are song lyrics were excerpted from Helen Reddy's '1970s hit pop song *I Am Woman*. These lyrics speak to women and feminists as a rallying cry for women's rights, fairness, and equality.[137] However, Gibson states that he chose these lyrics to recognize the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Movement.[138] In a statement from *nativewomenswilderness.org*:

> Our women, girls, and two-spirits are being taken from us in an alarming way. As of 2016, the National Crime Information Center has reported 5,712 cases of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls. Strikingly, the U.S. Department of Justice missing person database has only reported 116 cases. [Many of] these murders are committed by non-Native people on Native-owned land. The lack of communication combined with jurisdictional issues between state, local, federal, and tribal law enforcement make it nearly impossible to begin the investigative process.[139]

This movement has stemmed the creation of several organizations, coalitions, and even some government action to try and rectify this problem. However, as quoted above, a guaranteed solution still needs to be achieved. By spreading awareness, educating ourselves, and encouraging the public to recognize the problem, we have a chance to right these wrongs. Through the work of artists like Jeffrey Gibson, and organizations such as the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women, Native Women Wilderness, we can hope to achieve solidarity for these subjugated Indigenous women.[140] As can be noted again, the Indigenous Kinship Collective (IKC), through their Land Acknowledgment performance atop Gibson's work,

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[137] CBC Archives, "The Story of Helen Reddy's Song I Am Woman | Cbc Archives." CBCnews. CBC/Radio Canada, September 30, 2020. https://www.cbc.ca/archives/the-story-of-helen-reddy-s-song-i-am-woman-1.5264041.

[138] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 20:47-21:13.

[139] "MMIW." Native Womens Wilderness. Accessed December 8, 2021. https://www.nativewomenswilderness.org/mmiw.

[140] "CSVANW - Coalition to Stop Violence against Women," CSVANW Coalition to STOP Violence Against Women, accessed December 8, 2021, https://www.csvanw.org/.; "MMIW," Native Womens Wilderness, accessed December 8, 2021, https://www.nativewomenswilderness.org/mmiw.; Samantha Johnston and Mackenzie Neal, "Understanding the Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women Crisis in the United States," MMIW (Powell Scholars of the University of the Pacific), accessed December 8, 2021, https://understandingthemmiwcrisis.wordpress.com/.

recognized this issue by unrolling a banner that read, “NOT INVISIBLE, MMIWG2ST,” an acronym that stands for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, and Trans Folks. Through a combination of their banner and the text of Gibson’s work, IN NUMBERS TOO BIG TO IGNORE (fig. 25), IKC brought further recognition to this horrifying current history.

The text, IN NUMBERS, can also be recognition for the large number of Black Lives Matter protests that occurred in the months of 2020, following the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery on February 23, 2020, and George Floyd on May 25, 2020.[141] For many, this phrase could also be attributed to the COVID pandemic, which began in the spring of 2020. Large numbers of COVID cases and deaths were happening at the time, and this interpretation in particular was recognized by Gibson as having validity.[142] Another interpretation could be the large number of people currently living with HIV. According to the World Health Organization website, “Globally, 38.4 million people were living with HIV at the end of 2021. An estimated 0.7% of adults aged 15–49 years worldwide are living with HIV.”[143] Through Gibson’s piece, we find words that, originally from the feminist movement of the 1970s were used as an enduring anthem to celebrate women’s fight for equality, a fighting movement which continues to grow and evolve. However, these words have now been situated within a space capable of speaking to a multiplicity of people.[144]

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[141] Many people would attribute the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012 as being the primary cause to the formation of the Black Lives Matter movement and organization. It was through the deaths of Arbery and Floyd however, that the movement was brought to the forefront of public attention.
“Trayvon Martin.” Biography.com. A&E Networks Television, June 23, 2020. https://www.biography.com/crime-figure/trayvon-martin.

[142] Socrates Sculpture Park, “In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox,” 23:09-23:40.

[143] “HIV and AIDS,” World Health Organization (World Health Organization, April 19, 2023), https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids.

[144] Socrates Sculpture Park, “In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox,” 22:14-23:35.

The second text that Gibson selected for his work is, RESPECT INDIGENOUS LAND. Unlike the previous statement, this one is relatively straightforward. We the viewers, whether black, white, male, or female, need to understand that the land that we currently stand on was not always our own. This land was once that of the pre-colonized Indigenous people. Only through forced colonialism, assimilation, mass migration, and overall subjugation of an entire people were we able to claim this land as our own. Gibson minces no words in his interpretation of this text:

> [I] try to figure out where I want to be on the spectrum between art for art's sake and politically driven work… "respect indigenous land," [is a pared-down statement.] I [knew this work would be] directional, [and that being on the different sides of the artwork], which one you would see first [as you] entered [one side] of the park versus the other [would be important.] … [So] "respect indigenous land," was [one I wanted to be very clear about.] [It's a reminder] that entering any park, [such as Socrates Sculpture Park], you're on indigenous land. [Every] part of this city (New York City) [and] country, [you're] on indigenous land. [This text] is probably less negotiable for people.[145]

By asking people to respect Indigenous land, this text could also be seen as a means of protesting against those who are not respecting Indigenous land. The controversies surrounding the Dakota Access Pipeline; a 1,200-mile-long pipeline, owned and operated by Energy Transfer Partners, offers a relevant contextual example. In an episode from the podcast *CleanLaw*, the Dakota Access Pipeline is described as a pipeline that transports crude oil from the Bakken Fields in North Dakota, through South Dakota, Iowa, down to a terminal in Illinois.[146] The pipeline has been fiercely opposed by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and environmental groups because of concerns that a spill would contaminate state and tribal drinking water, and damage

[145] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 24:00-25:13.

[146] Robin Just, "Episode 77-Cleanlaw Quick Take: The Dakota Access Pipeline with Hannah Perls and Carrie Jenks ," Environmental & Energy Law Program (Harvard Law School, February 15, 2023), https://eelp.law.harvard.edu/2023/02/cleanlaw-quick-takes-dakota-access-pipeline-update-with-hannah-perls-and-carrie-jenks/, 00:00-00:44.

important cultural and historic sites.[147] Despite their protests construction was completed in March of 2017, and the pipeline became operational in May of the same year. Litigation has largely focused on one small section of that pipeline which plans to go under Lake Oahe, a lake which sits one half mile within the current boundaries of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. This could easily place the land and waters of the Sioux Reservation at risk.[148] The most current update on the situation is that the pipeline is operational and running, although is currently not run under Lake Oahe. However, a draft environmental impact statement from the Army Corps, concerning the permit of the Lake Oahe pipeline section, it to be released in the Spring of 2023. Depending on the course of litigation, the Army Corps of Engineers, a federal agency within the Department of Defense, will issue a final decision on whether the pipeline to be placed under Lake Oahe. That said, if the Corps chooses to deny permission, the pipeline must immediately stop operations.[149] Using text like, RESPECT INDIGENOUS LAND, Gibson encourages viewers to consider the land that people, like the Lenapes, used to call their own. At the same time, he also asks viewers to consider the present land those same Indigenous people call their own now, and how it and they continue to be abused for their resources.

The third text selected states, POWERFUL BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT. This phrase conjures images of binary opposites; male-female, brains-brawn, introvert-extrovert, orderly-chaotic, abstraction-representation. It elucidates the fact that one cannot be without the other, in that without the other pair, the true meaning of a word is unable to achieve its fully intended value. On the other hand, it's through these differences that one can find their strength. Gibson speaks to this phrase by explaining how many minority people are tired of being seen as

[147] Just, "Episode 77-Cleanlaw Quick Take," 00:44-01:06.
[148] Just, "Episode 77-Cleanlaw Quick Take," 01:06-02:25.
[149] Just, "Episode 77-Cleanlaw Quick Take," 06:44-07:12.

simply that: "A minority, [seen as] marginal, on the periphery, underrecognized, and underrepresented… [these words describe our disempowerment, and it takes its toll.] I've had lots of conversations with other [brown folks who are sick of it.] I don't want to be called a minority anymore; I understand what it means, [and] what it's referring to, but we're also always affirming that there is a [majority centralized, and we are not part of it.]"[150] With statements like POWERFUL BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT, Gibson prompts viewers to consider how they are part of a mainstream culture, but also may be part of a minority. Gibson further states, "Even someone who's really racist, they are afraid of my skin tone, they are afraid of my culture, they are afraid of these histories being centralized…that fear turns into a recognition of power."[151] In essence, Gibson is looking to encourage those of the "minority" to see themselves as being empowered through their differences. It is through texts such as, IN NUMBERS TOO BIG TO IGNORE, POWERFUL BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT, and the final fourth text, THE FUTURE IS PRESENT, that the artist raises a call to action for all those seeking empowerment for a better future.

The fourth and final text reads as, THE FUTURE IS PRESENT. A text used in a separate work in 2015 (fig. 26), this phrase in many ways speaks to one of Gibson's artistic core values: a need and push to see Indigenous people, art, and culture in the center of western and global civilization. Through Gibson's *BOYEMHIBOH*, the performances enacted by other Indigenous peoples around, on top of, and inside the work, and through the work of other Indigenous artists across the world, we're seeing a desire for change. We find artists looking, not just to make a

[150] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 26:30-27:00.

[151] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 27:23-27:42.

statement, but to firmly establish themselves within the contemporary art world, as a positive force for Indigenous people at large. Much like in the IKC land acknowledgment performance, Gibson's text THE FUTURE IS PRESENT, is not an empty plea for acknowledgment, but an angry demand for results. To put it simply, Gibson is asking, "Why wait for change? Why not make a change for ourselves now? Let's not wait for a better future, let's make the current present that future." In her interview with Gibson, curator Jess Wilcox comments, "[The Future is Present is a key phrase when] thinking about [*BOYEMHIBOH*] in general. [The work's] speculative future focus, [is not looking] to repeat history and make it rigid, [but to use] history in terms of the historical references you, [Gibson], use, [opening up], and imagining this monument for people of the future."[152] Gibson goes on to reply how he was raised with the mindset that it was his responsibility, as an artist and individual, to create his own movement. In essence, only through personal perseverance can Gibson enact change. He cannot rely on others to provide it for him.

However, speculative fiction and futurism are not new ideas invented by Gibson. One must only look to examples of science fiction to see that. In fact, other art historical trends, such as Afrofuturism—a concept Gibson has been very aware of throughout his art making career—laid a foundation for his personal vision of an Indigenous future. Discussed in John P. Lukavic's essay on Gibson, *WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN, WHAT IS, AND WHAT WILL BE,* "Afrofuturism is, an aesthetic that combines science fiction, African history, [and] magical realism, with the past, present, and future experience of being black, [all which lead] to a form of faith that relies on a positive outlook for the future. Niami Safia Sandy, curator of the 2016 exhibition *Black Magic*, adds that in Afrofuturism, 'time is this really fluid thing. Now is now,

[152] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 28:09-28:58.

but the past is now and the future too.'"[153] Through Afrofuturism, Gibson found a strategy that allows reinvention of himself, his art, and his community into what "Native could be like," without being restrained by what, "Native is." Looking past merely finding equality for Indigenous people by denouncing any relationship to power, Gibson instead chooses to manifest his own future present destiny.[154] Gibson realizes that one doesn't have to live by the worldview one was taught, but rather can deconstruct it, and place it the way one wants it.[155] As he's quoted saying in Lukavic's essay, "Don't accept the circumstances you [are] in; acknowledge that you are in them and then find a future. Instead of being the victim, find a solution. Instead of only looking back, understand that this is where you are today, and then lay out a plan for the future to get out from under those things."[156] This is the future Gibson seeks for all Indigenous people, as voiced through text like, THE FUTURE IS PRESENT. But speaking only to Indigenous people is not his intention. Gibson's work has broadened to speak to all people who connect with his ideas and themes.[157]

Meaning

We come to the fifth and final aspect of counter-monuments: meaning, which in many ways can be recognized throughout the entire process of analyzing Gibson's work. Given his ability to work with form, color, and language in such a way that it speaks to a multitude of differing audience members, the meaning within his work isn't concrete and absolute. As stated before, "Traditional monuments are didactic, imparting clear, unified messages through figural

[153] Dery, 1994, Newcomb, 2017, and Sandy, 2016, cited in Lukavic, John P. et. al, "WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN, WHAT IS, AND WHAT WILL BE," in *Jeffrey Gibson LIKE A HAMMER*, ed. Lukavic, John P. (Denver Art Museum and Prestel, 2018), 29-32. Citations found on 35.

[154] Lukavic, "WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN, WHAT IS, AND WHAT WILL BE," 31-32.

[155] Lukavic, "WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN, WHAT IS, AND WHAT WILL BE," 32.

[156] Lukavic, "WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN, WHAT IS, AND WHAT WILL BE," 32.

[157] Lukavic, "WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN, WHAT IS, AND WHAT WILL BE," 32.

representation, explicit textual or graphic reference to people, places or events, allegorical figures, and archetypal symbolic forms."[158] Gibson's *BOYEMHIBOH* doesn't always do that. This work is a visual smack in the face; a unique and colorful splash in a gray city space, encouraging viewers to see it, study it, and question why it's there, and what it means. By referring to the architecture of both Cahokia and the Great Serpent Mound are made, Gibson encourages his viewers to re-consider the histories we're told and question the validity of what we think we know. This is applicable to our preconceptions on the histories of past and present Indigenous peoples, as well as what we perceive as a traditional monument.

The same can be found in the text of the work. Although not invalidating the interpretations of the general public, Gibson pushes viewers to recognize the modern-day genocide taking place in the Americas, by referencing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Movement in IN NUMBERS TO BIG TOO IGNORE; that the land of the U.S. today was forcibly taken by Euro-American settlers, and re-built on the backs of Black, and Indigenous people in RESPECT INDIGENOUS LAND; that there is a strength rather than disempowerment in our differences in, POWERFUL BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT; and that the Indigenous people are a contemporary art, people, and culture ready and able to be a positive force in this global society.[159] Gibson capitalizes on how text can be resistant to a finite meaning or norm, and can be read in a multitude of ways, depending on the context, history, and experience of any one viewer. Through these different interpretations, conversation is encouraged, and new meanings are discovered.[160]

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[158] Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, "Counter-Monuments," 728-29.

[159] It should be noted how that the Spanish, French, and the Dutch in New York City, were also forces who subjected African people, and the Indigenous people of the United States to levels of genocide, slavery, racism, etc.

[160] Parrish Art Museum, "David Pagel in Conversation with Jeffrey Gibson," 22:55-28:06.

Looking at the varying performances enacted across Gibson's work, we can see the initial meaning growing as well. Through IKC's Land Acknowledgment performance, we are encouraged to consider the land upon which this structure is laid, the land we live on, to question who originally built and cultivated this land, and to recognize and question the present genocide happening on American soil. Through Laura Ortman's musical performance, we can begin to see Gibson's work come to life, reflecting through sound, the currents of the nearby East River. Through Emily Johnson and company's dance performance, we see Gibson's work come to life through movement and sound, as we're asked to consider the connections and responsibilities we have to this land and its original people. And finally, through Gibson, MX Oops, and Raven Chacon's *A Warm Darkness*, we're asked to consider the intimacy that can come from rave culture, dancing alone, and the opportune relationship we have by being able to view this act of solitary dance.

I want to reiterate this work's strength in Gibson's active permission of allowing it to be interacted with in different ways. By giving the artists and audience permission to physically perform and interpret the artwork, the meaning can expand beyond its creator's original intentions. "Like other forms of art, the monument is most benign when static: there when you face it, gone when you turn your back. But when it begins to come to life, to grow, shrink, or change form, the monument may become threatening. No longer at the mercy of the viewer's will, it seems to have a will of its own, to beckon us at inopportune moments. Such monuments become a little like Frankenstein's monster, a golem out of the maker's control."[161] By encouraging viewers to consider his work through their personal histories and experiences, the work can be interpreted and discussed in different ways.

[161] Young, "The Counter-Monument," 284.

Queer, Camp, and Queer Potential

When first analyzing Gibson's *BOYEMHIBOH*, the queer characteristics of the work may not be entirely obvious to the naked eye. Much like Gibson's references to cultural artifacts such as Cahokia, The Great Serpents Mound, and "Can You Feel It" by Mr. Fingers, and more, if you're not "in the know," you may not recognize and understand the references Gibson is using. In fact, when describing the work, Gibson states, "[this work serves] as an homage to [the] ingenuity of Indigenous North American peoples and cultures, to pre-Columbian Mississippian architecture, and to queer camp aesthetics."[162] Beyond that, any mention of queer or camp in the work is left for audience interpretation. If the audience is not knowledgeable of queer camp, then they might be left confused, although this in turn, could encourage the viewing audience into doing their own research. Queer and camp are not the same things, though overlap may exist. Queer is an act of being unapologetically different and a means of engaging with questions of sexuality, gender, identity, power, and politics of oppression. Camp is a style and sensibility that seeks to express irony and subversion of mainstream society through deliberate assumption of a gaudy aesthetic. As described by Susan Sontag, the writer who popularized the term, its characteristics are "artifice, frivolity, naïve middle-class pretentiousness, and shocking excess." It is utilized in many mediums, including film, fashion, theater, music, and even modes of speech. However, as noted in Emily Barker's, *From Marginal To Mainstream: The Queer History of Camp Aesthetics & Ethical Analysis of Camp in High Fashion*,

> [Sontag was not apt to credit the queer community for creating camp] ... [even though] camp from a linguistic perspective, [always has] been related to the LGBTQ+ experience. The queer community is responsible for developing camp, and it is necessary to highlight this when speaking about camp, [for without their distinct tastes and needs, the aesthetic

[162] "'MONUMENTS NOW' – Part I: Jeffrey Gibson," Socrates Sculpture Park, 2020, https://socratessculpturepark.org/exhibition/jeffrey-gibson/.

would have been something completely different.] Though Sontag can be credited with popularizing the aesthetic of camp, it still existed before she wrote about it.[163]

Camp is not an easily definable term. Much like queer, it's an ever-evolving style that's seen different iterations as it enters and exits mainstream culture. Whereas high art generally incorporates beauty and value, using the elements and principles of art and design, camp finds a need to be lively, audacious, and dynamic. Gibson's description of his work as having queer camp aesthetics makes sense in light of the artist's use of excessive color and pattern. Combining this with queer's ability to challenge and resist expectations or norms, i.e., high art, as well as traditional monument standards and expectations, we find a work that looks to be all its own, combining likeminded characteristics of both queer and counter-monuments. By creating a piece that so uniquely stands out from its gray cityscape background, we find a work that instantly draws the eye. Yet even Gibson being unaware to how his work would be visually seen against the high rises of Manhattan can be seen as a characteristic of camp; "Camp which knows itself to be Camp is usually less satisfying…campiness [is] something that can not intentionally exist, and much less exist in the mainstream."[164]

Considering the text of Gibson's work, we can also find queer potential in its meaning, specifically, IN NUMBERS TOO BIG TO IGNORE, POWERFUL BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT, and THE FUTURE IS PRESENT. Considering the first, we find that IN NUMBERS TOO BIG TO IGNORE, can be referencing the population of those within the LGBTQIA+ community, or those affected by the HIV AIDS crisis. A recent survey released by Gallup states that 7.1% of U.S. adults consider themselves to be part of the LGBT identity,

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[163] Emily Barker, "From Marginal to Mainstream: The Queer History of Camp Aesthetics & Ethical Analysis of Camp in High Fashion." Honors Projects, Seattle Pacific University, 118, 2021.

[164] Barker, "From Marginal to Mainstream," 2.

86.3% saying they are straight or heterosexual, and 6.6% not offering an opinion. These results are based on aggregated 2021 data, encompassing interviews with more than 12,000 U.S. adults. The increase in LGBT identification in recent years largely reflects the higher prevalence of such identities among the youngest U.S. adults compared with the older generations they are replacing in the U.S. adult population. Roughly 21% of Generation Z Americans who have reached adulthood—those born between 1997 and 2003—identify as LGBT. That is nearly double the proportion of millennials who do so, while the gap widens even further when compared with older generations.[165] Considering the recent actions of those within our U.S. government to enact legislation that prohibits the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community, specifically those within the transgender community, it should be considered how many would actually be affected by such laws.[166] In a similar vein to those protesting as part of the Black Lives Matter rallies of 2020, or to Gibson referring to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Movement, IN NUMBERS TOO BIG TO IGNORE, can be interpreted as a call to action to the viewing audience to consider those of the LGBTQIA+ community who are facing oppression and to understand how many truly are being affected. Considering POWERFUL BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT, we can find a similar affinity the LGBTQIA+ community might have with such a statement. Their differences with that of the general populace can be understood as their strength. And finally, THE FUTURE IS PRESENT can be understood as to how the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies are advocating for them in the present; fighting and earning their rights to be seen and treated equally like any other individual in this United States. Using such open-

[165] Jeffrey M. Jones, "LGBT Identification in U.S. Ticks up to 7.1%," Gallup.com (Gallup, June 10, 2022), https://news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx.

[166] Matt Lavietes and Elliott Ramos, "Nearly 240 Anti-LGBTQ Bills Filed in 2022 so Far, Most of Them Targeting Trans People," NBCNews.com (NBCUniversal News Group, March 20, 2022), https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-politics-and-policy/nearly-240-anti-lgbtq-bills-filed-2022-far-targeting-trans-people-rcna20418.

ended statements as the text for his work, RESPECT INDIGENOUS LAND being the exception, Gibson allows the viewing audience to interpret the form, and text as they see fit. This allows, *BOYEMHIBOH* the opportunity to be self-reflexive and have queer potential for many.[167]

The performances can also be seen as means of enhancing the queer monument characteristics found in Gibson's work. To reiterate, David Halperin's definition of "queer" is, "whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant." Furthermore, like the strategies of a counter-monument, queer monuments also look to describe minority groups or darker sides of history. The fact that Gibson allowed his work to act as a stage, something not typically seen in traditional monuments, allows for queer potential. However, the performances took this even further by speaking to histories atypical to traditional monuments. The IKC looked to reveal the present, generally undiscussed Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Movement and to acknowledge and advocate for the stolen lands of the Lenape people. Laura Ortman brought Gibson's work to life, activating it with sound, while reflecting on those Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and later in her performance the sounds and movements of the nearby East River. Through Emily Johnson and her accompanying dance company, we find a performance that reflects on the land and nearby East River as well, noting how it connects us all, and can be an encouragement to acknowledge and help those Lenape people who were excommunicated from their lands into diaspora. And finally, through Gibson, MX Oops, and Raven Chacon's collaborative work *A Warm Darkness*, we find exploration into the psyche of the individual, caught up in dancing alone as an act of self-expression, and maybe self-exploration, a reflection of the experiences Gibson, and many other LGBTQIA+ peoples, may have felt dancing in the nightclubs of their youth.

[167] Socrates Sculpture Park, "In Conversation: Artist Jeffrey Gibson & Socrates Curator Jess Wilcox," 23:08-23:40.

Conclusions

Jeffrey Gibson's *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House* uses all five aspects of a counter-monument as posited by Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley, as well as several aspects of a queer monument. Furthermore, it has queer potential in the eyes of public viewers. Through form, this work stands out in shape and color from traditional monuments, evoking qualities of architecture seen across the globe. With its wheat-paste posters we find a work, in comparison with the architecture of the surrounding Manhattan high-rises, that stands apart as uniquely shaped and colorful. Given their wont to fade over time, newly designed posters can be applied to the surface of the work as well, evoking new and different meanings. Through site, specifically Socrates Sculpture Park, the work had the opportunity to be seen by many people walking through the park, riding in boats on the nearby East River, those standing in surrounding high-rises, and those flying in planes above. This differs from the site of many traditional monuments as they're often hidden from the public, in enclosed gardens or courtyards. Designing the work for easy disassembly, removal, and reassembly, allows it to change locations easily. With its ability to move nomadically, the site of the work can change as well, granting new scenery and perspective, and allowing the work to assume new and different meanings as it migrates. This ability could also help decentralize cultural hubs. By creating a work that could be assembled anywhere, whether in a small town in middle of nowhere, or a population heavy location such as New York, this ever-changing monumental work could be an opportunity for peoples of all communities, both large and small, to experience and learn about something new. Regarding subject, this work reflects on the histories of Cahokia and the Great Serpent Mound, a history and peoples not generally recognized in the public mainstream. Discussing these civilizations, Gibson reveals the histories and perceptions of past Indigenous peoples so often

found forgotten in public education and academia of a Euro-American audience. Through visitor experience, we find the title of the work, performances, and texts. The title, taking inspiration from Mr. Finger's song "Can You Feel It" evokes a sense of openness, intimacy, and familial community, especially with those within the queer community and people of color. The performances allowed opportunities for other Indigenous artists, with their own personal biographies, life experiences, and skills, to interact with the structure, influencing and growing originally intended meaning. This process can continue to occur as new performances are created. Although the texts remain unchanged, the meaning of that text can be interpreted differently by viewers, given their varying backgrounds. In, IN NUMBERS TOO BIG TO IGNORE, we find a call to action to recognize the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Movement, the Black Lives Matter rallies, the vast number of COVID cases and deaths, and the growing number of people living with HIV. In, RESPECT INDIGENOUS LAND, we find a call to respect the lands of those who used to call it their own, while at the same time, considering the Indigenous people whose land continues to be abused. IN POWERFUL BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT, we find encouragement for "minorities" to see themselves as being empowered through their differences. This could apply to those within Indigenous, Black, or LGBTQIA+ communities. Through THE FUTURE IS PRESENT, to enact future visions and change in the present, rather than wait for someone else to do it, is encouraged. Considering the queer camp aesthetics of *BOYEMHIBOH*, Gibson's use of excessive color and pattern can be recognized. Considering queer's ability to challenge and resist expectations or norms, i.e., traditional monument standards and expectations, we find a work that appears visually different from traditional monuments in both shape and color and speaks of a peoples and history not often recognized through monumental forms. Gibson also queers the monument by allowing it the

ability to easily move from place to place. Through the text and performances, queer potential can be found as well. Through the performances, something atypical is occurring in, on, and around the monument. Allowing the performances to activate, influence, and evolve the meaning of the work is queer. Gibson's encouraging interpretation in the text on his work, increasing its availability to multiple types of viewers is also queer. Through this encouraged interpretation we find text such as, IN NUMBERS TOO BIG TO IGNORE, POWERFUL BECAUSE WE ARE DIFFERENT, and THE FUTURE IS PRESENT, as all being discussion on topics surrounding the LGBTQIA+ community. By meeting the five standards of a counter-monument listed by Stevens, Franck, and Fazakerley, several aspects of a queer monument, and having queer potential in the eyes of public viewers, Jeffrey Gibson's *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House* can be identified as a queer counter-monument.

Figures

Figure 1. Image by Karin Richert, image and image description provided by Katja Demnig, Gunter Demnig, *Stolpersteine (stumbling stones or blocks)*, image describes, "Lothar Jonas, the father, was born on November 25, 1904, in Kassel (Hessen). He married Elvira Wolff born on July 16, 1904 in Berlin. They [received] a son on January 22, 1930, and lived together in Berlin-Wilmersdorf till they were deported on the same day on March 6, 1943, to Auschwitz. They were all murdered. No-one knows when they were murdered.", (96 x 96 x 100 mm high, Hole is no more than 12 cm deep), brass and stone.

Figure 2. Image by Alexander Blum, Peter Eisenman and Buro Happold, *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, completed December 2004, 200,000 sq ft., concrete slabs or "stelae"

Figure 3. Image courtesy of Gerz studio; photograph: Kulturbehoerde, Hamburg), Jochen and Esther Shalev-Gerz, *Monument against Fascism, War and Violence—and for Peace and Human Rights in Harburg,* 1986, (12 x 1 x 1 m.), 7 tons, 1 lead–clad column with aluminum structure, 1 text panel

Figure 4. Image by Ginger Riddick, powwow dance performers and regalia, Choctaw Casino Pow Wow Gallery 2, 2010, Durant OK

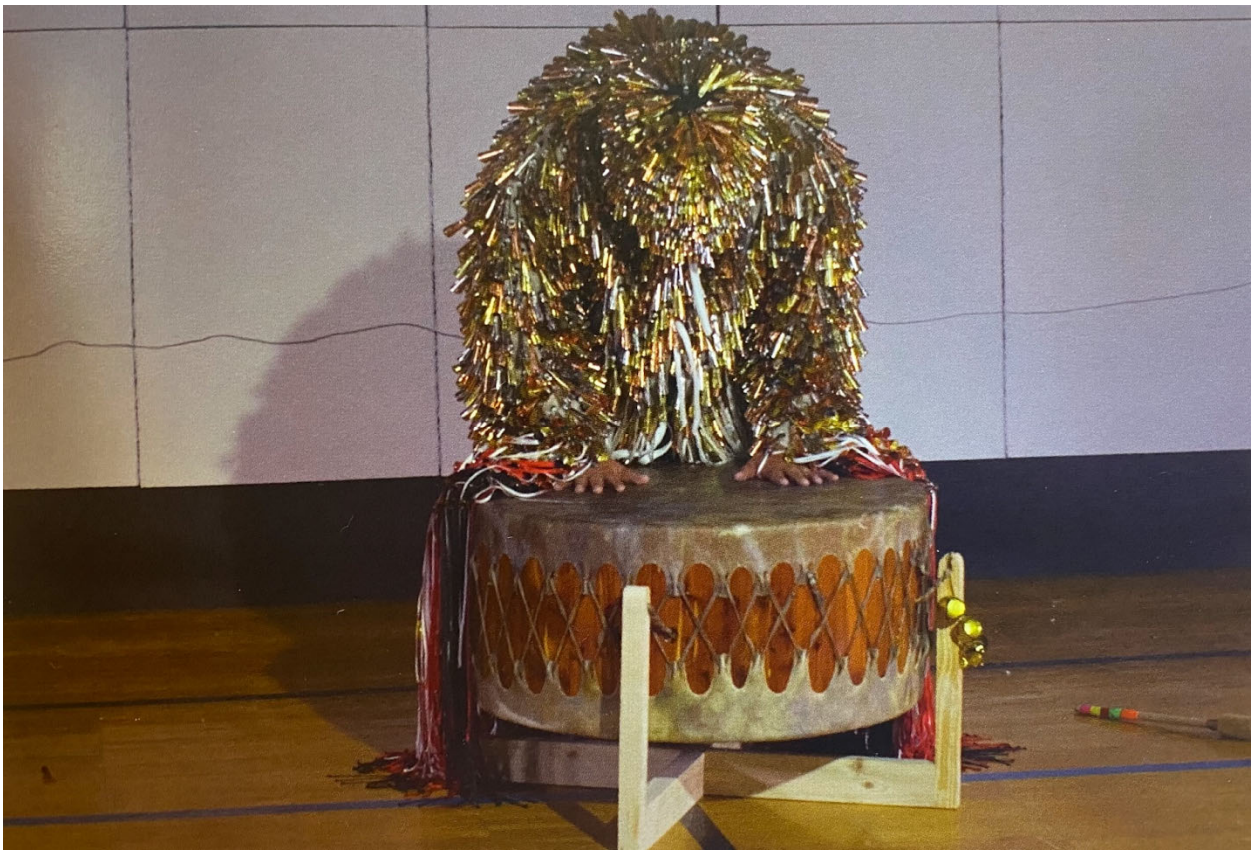

Figure 5. Jeffrey Gibson, video still from *LIKE A HAMMER*, 2016

Figure 6. Image by Adrian Grycuk, Julita Wójcik, fully re-constructed *Tęcza*, May 2014, steel and ersatz flowers

Figure 7. Image by Charles J. Sharp, Imhotep, *Step Pyramid of Djoser*, 27th century BC, (109 x 121 x 62.5 m.), limestone

Figure 8. Jeffrey Gibson, Two Sides of *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House*, 2020, plywood structure, posters, steel, LEDs, and performance, (44 x 44 x 21 ft.), Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY.

Figure 9. Jeffrey Gibson, One of four sides of *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House* with text reading "Respect Indigenous Land," 2020, plywood structure, posters, steel, LEDs, and performance, (44 x 44 x 21 ft.), Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIZfGCOWcTQ&t=3409s

Figure 10. Jeffrey Gibson, One of four sides of *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House* with text reading "Powerful Because We Are Different," 2020, plywood structure, posters, steel, LEDs, and performance, (44 x 44 x 21 ft.), Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIZfGCOWcTQ&t=3409s

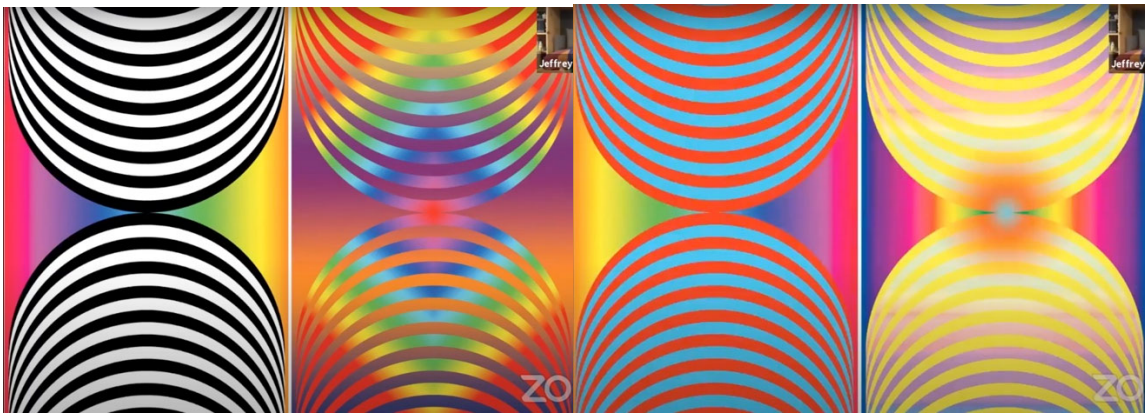

Figure 11. Jeffrey Gibson, Poster design detail from *Because Once You Enter My House It Becomes Our House*, 2020, plywood structure, posters, steel, LEDs, and performance, (44 x 44 x 21 ft.), Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIZfGCOWcTQ&t=3409s

Figure 12. Adena culture, *Great Serpents Mound*, 800 BCE-100 CE, yellow clay, ash, rock, and soil, (3 x 1348 ft.), Serpent Mound Historical Site, Peebles, OH. https://woub.org/2017/08/18/celebrate-quirk-of-cosmic-geometry-at-serpent-mound/

Figure 13. Depiction of *Monks Mound* and other mound structures at *Cahokia*, Collinsville, IL. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIZfGCOWcTQ&t=3409s

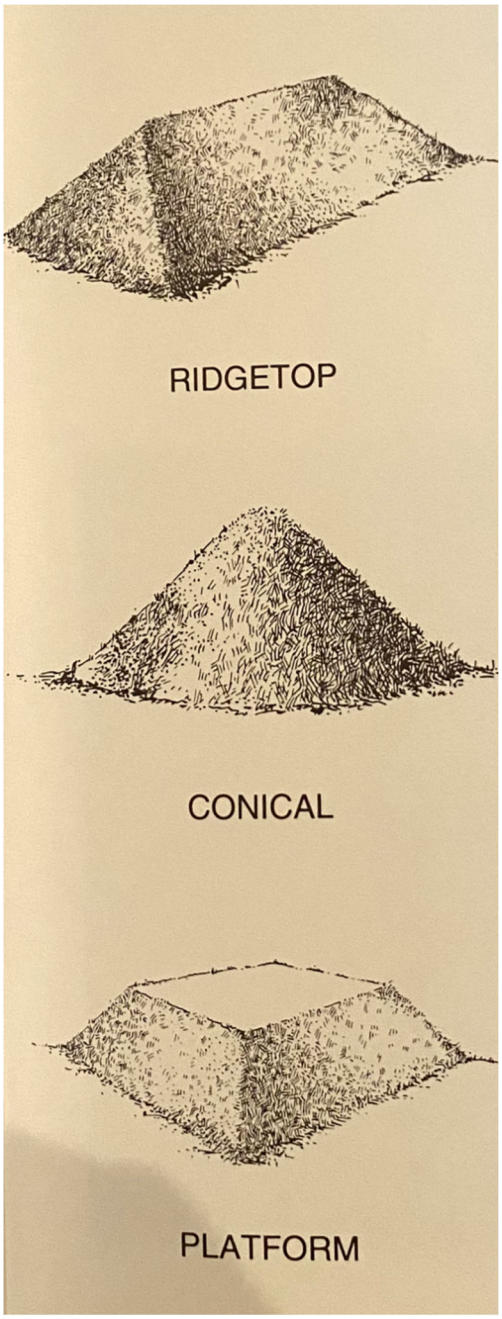

Figure 14. Image by Albert Meyer, *The Principle Mississippian mound types*, Claudia Gellman Mink, and William Iseminger. *Cahokia: City of the Sun*. Collinsville, IL: Cahokia Mounds Museum Society, 1992, 35

Figure 15. *Pyramids of Giza,* c. 2570 BC, limestone, mortar, granite, (146.6 x 138.5 m.) Giza, Greater Cairo, Egypt. https://www.planetware.com/tourist-attractions-/pyramids-of-giza-egy-giza-giza.htm

Figure 16. *Great Pyramid of Cholula*, adobe brick, 3rd century BC- 9th century AD, (300 x 315 x 25 m.), Cholula, Puebla, Mexico. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gran_Pirámide_de_Cholula,_Puebla,_México,_2013-10-12,_DD_10.JPG

Figure 17. *El Castillo (Temple of Kukulcán)*, limestone, 8-12th century AD, (24 x 30 x 6 m.), Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Castillo,_Chichen_Itza

Figure 18. *Borobudur Buddhist temple complex*, 9th century Sailendra Dynasty, Magelang, Central Java. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borobudur

Figure 19. Image by Cut/Cut/Cut: Chelsea Knight & Itziar Barrio, *Indigenous Kinship Collective performs a Land Acknowledgment from Jeffrey Gibson's monument installation 'Because Once You Enter My House It Becomes Our House,'* July 24th, 2020, Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY.

Figure 20. Image by KMDeco Creative Solutions: Mark DiConzo, *Laura Ortman's violin performance atop Jeffrey Gibson's installation 'Because Once You Enter My House It Becomes Our House*,' July 24th, 2020, Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY.

Figure 21. Image by Scott Lynch, *Emily Johnson and company site-specific dance work atop Jeffrey Gibson's installation 'Because Once You Enter My House It Becomes Our House*,' September 16th, 2020, Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY.

Figure 22. Jeffrey Gibson, Mx. Oops, Raven Chacon, *A Warm Darkness*, 2022. *Kavi Gupta*. Accessed March 8, 2023. https://kavigupta.com/exhibitions/400-jeffrey-gibson-the-body-electric-site-santa-fe-santa-fe-nm/.

Figure 23. Jeffrey Gibson, One of four sides of *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House* with text reading "In Numbers Too Big To Ignore," 2020, plywood structure, posters, steel, LEDs, and performance, (44 x 44 x 21 ft.), Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIZfGCOWcTQ&t=3409s

Figure 24. Jeffrey Gibson, One of four sides of *Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House* with text reading "The Future Is Present," 2020, plywood structure, posters, steel, LEDs, and performance, (44 x 44 x 21 ft.), Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIZfGCOWcTQ&t=3409s

Figure 25. Video still from *IKC's Land Acknowledgment Atop Jeffrey Gibson's Monument at Socrates*, July 24th, 2020, Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY. YouTube. YouTube, January 6, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdxIpL9RoKE.

Figure 26. Jeffrey Gibson, *THE FUTURE IS PRESENT*, 2015.

Figure 27. Jeffrey Gibson, Installation view of “Jeffrey Gibson: INFINITE INDIGENOUS QUEER LOVE” at deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum. Photo by BAR Editorial, October 17, 2021 - March 13, 2022.

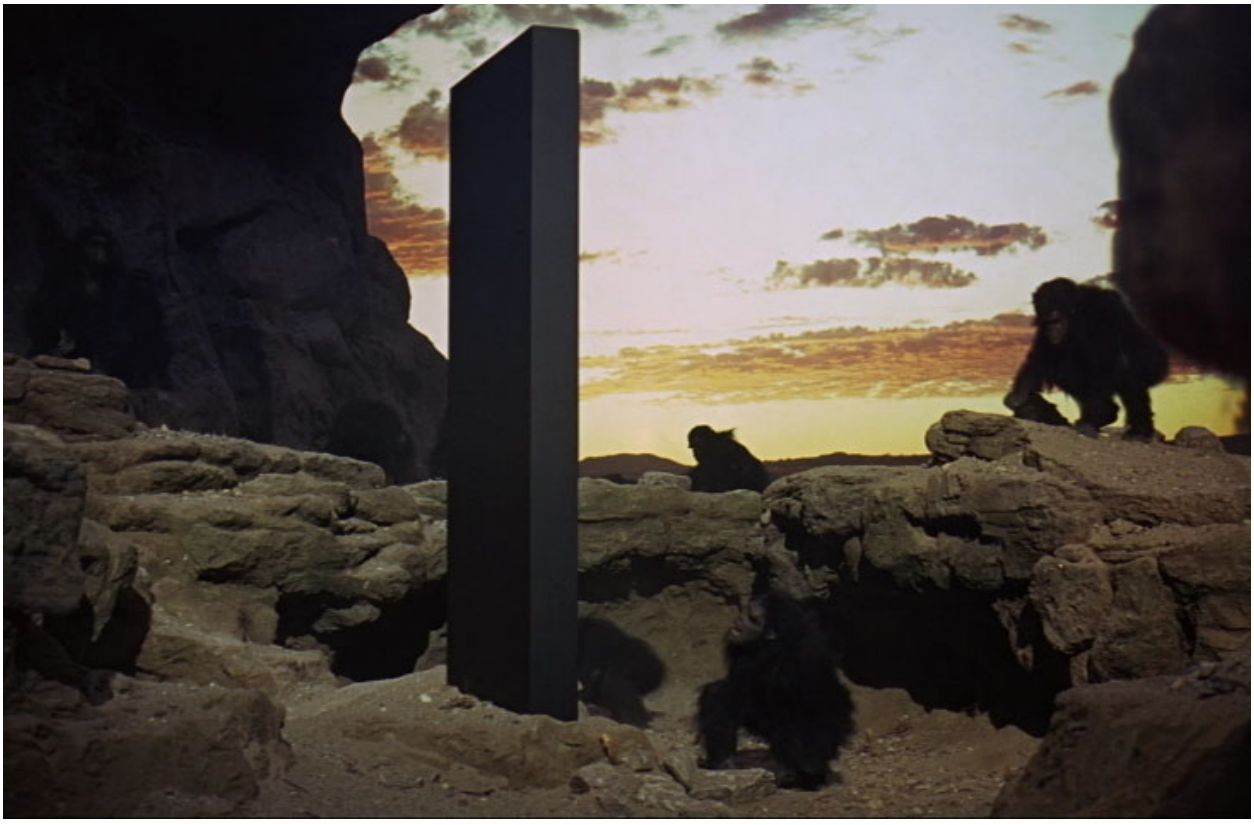

Figure 28. Film still, showing the Monolith sculpture, from *2001: A Space Odyssey,* 1968.

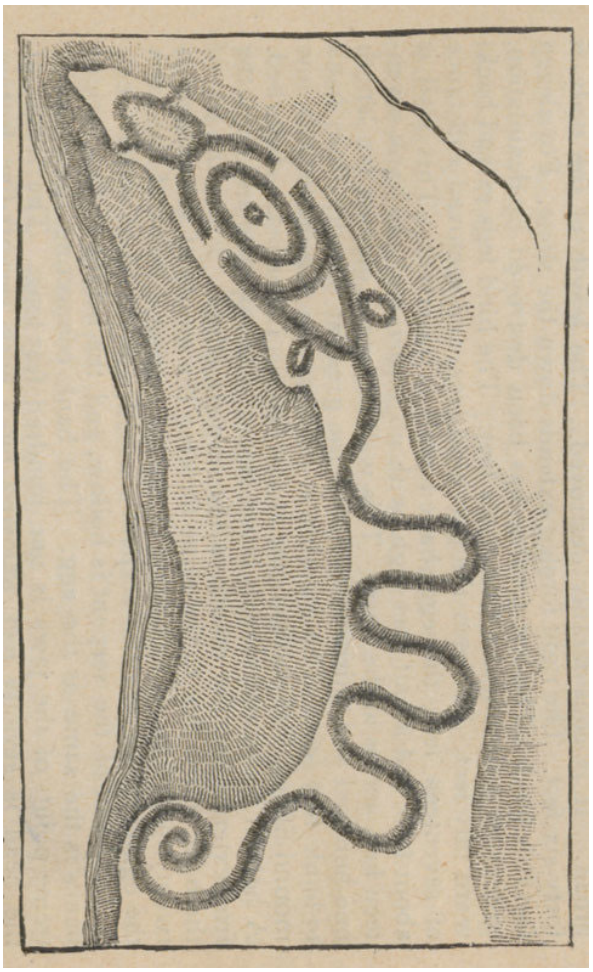

Figure 29. John P. MacLean, Color outline of 1885 map of The Great Serpent Mound showing the wishbone-shaped earthwork, which was interpreted by MacLean as a frog. (Courtesy of Ohio History Connection.)

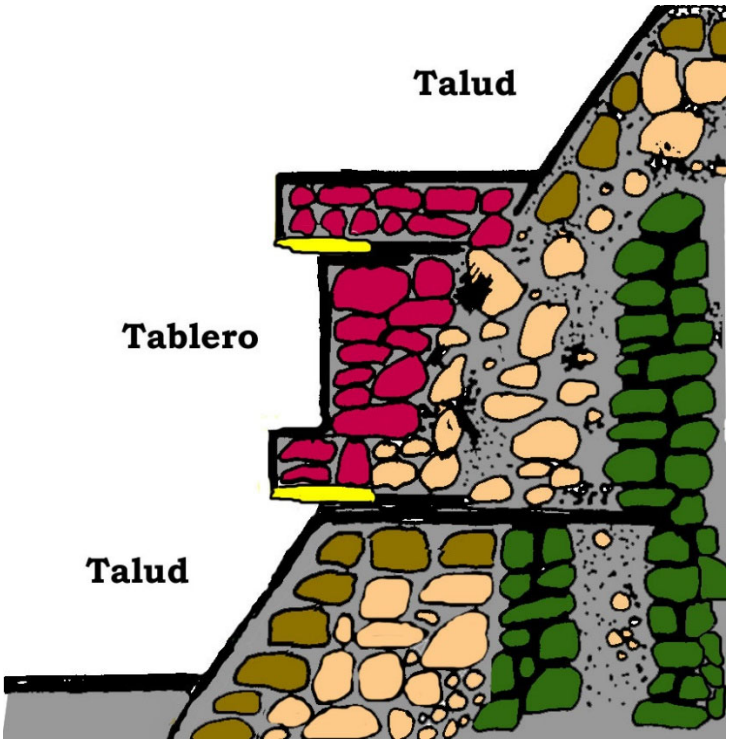

Figure 30. HJPD, Schematic representation of the *talud tablero* style used in many Mesoamerican pyramids and a prominent stylistic feature of Teotihuacan architecture. Image created April 8, 2009. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talud-tablero#/media/File:TableroTalud.jpg

Appendices

Appendix 1

Co-authors Duncan and Diaz-Granádos have constructed a coherent narrative of what we believe to be the essential elements of the genesis story of the Dhegiha, the *Mo*^{n}*-Thi*^{n}*-Ka-Ga'-Xe*, or *The Making of the Earth Rite*. A brief version of that reconstructed story, the following is excerpted from Bradley T. Lepper, James R. Duncan, Carol Diaz-Granádos and Tod A. Frolking's *Arguments for the Age of Serpent Mound*.

Long before time began, the Water Spirits, the Great Serpent, and his children the snakes, coerced First Man's eldest son, Morning Star, the one who would succeed First Man as the Sun, and some companions into coming down to the Beneath World and engaging in some friendly competitive games of chance. The final game, the single stick ball game, involved high stakes—the losers' heads. The Water Spirits won and the Great Serpent, the chief of the Water Spirits, cut off their heads. One of the Water Spirits, a particularly greedy, bloated, and eyeless creature representing death, swallowed all but Morning Star's head. The Upper Worlds were thrown into darkness, there being no shining Sun to rise into the sky. Morning Star's sister, Evening Star, had two sons, Stone and the Grey Wolf, whom Morning Star had helped to raise. These two young men went to visit their grandmother, First Woman or Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies. First Woman lived in her lodge at the top of the Beneath Worlds, the Moon. She fed the two young men and gave them several powerful sacred weapons to defeat the Water Spirits. First Woman also painted her grandsons: Grey Wolf was painted black, a signal to all that he would kill all foes and take no prisoners; Stone was painted red and white, and he was given a holy bull snake's hide, to tie on the left arm of a vanquished enemy to make him a prisoner. Grey Wolf was sent to scout and find the town of the Water Spirits. First Woman changed into a spider and carried her grandson Stone down into the Beneath World to help Grey Wolf attack and defeat the Water Spirits. The two boys, Stone and Grey Wolf, gave a whoop and attacked the town of the Water Spirits. They quickly shot the bloated Water Spirit, Death, and he vomited up Morning Star's companions in his death throes. These resurrected companions joined in the fight with Stone and Grey Wolf. The two boys and their companions attacked the Water Spirits. They shot the Great Serpent, wounding him and causing him to fall. Stone rushed up to him and tied the holy bull snakeskin to his upper left arm; Grey Wolf picked up the war club that the Great Serpent had taken from Morning Star after beheading him. Walking among the writhing and bleeding snakes, Grey Wolf collected their scalps and weapons, while Stone made the Great Serpent led him to the center of the town to retrieve Morning Star's head. Singing their victory songs, Stone, Grey Wolf, and their companions danced into the sky, taking the head of Morning Star to his mother, First Woman. First Woman and her grandsons made a feast at which the Great Serpent was given gifts and First Woman adopted him as a husband to replace her loss. As her adopted husband, the Great Serpent then had intercourse with First Woman, and she gained his ability to resurrect or reincarnate and rejuvenate herself. In this crucial event, First Woman became a holy or sacred vessel, receiving from the Great Serpent his unique power of resurrection. This is the image rendered in black pigment on the wall at Picture Cave (Duncan 2015, 224). This graphic and salient image mirrors the Serpent Mound as mapped by MacLean in 1885. This imagery records the moment when First Woman bridges the cosmos, bringing the life-giving powers from the Beneath Worlds to the Middle World, the Earth. With this crucial

acquisition, First Woman becomes the sacred receptacle of these vital, animating powers. First Woman again became Grandmother Spider and wove a holy web of life, the Earth, the snare where all life takes on a bodily form. Into this web Stone and the Grey Wolf placed the head and body of Morning Star, who then burst forth from this snare as the axis mundi or sacred tree with the risen (resurrected) Sun. The Middle World was then ready for all living things, including humans. The Great Serpent coils around the sacred tree or axis and becomes the rainbow in the daytime sky and the Milky Way in the night sky.

What has just been narrated is a widespread genesis tradition: while differing in detail, its central or core theme is amazingly similar across many nations. This genesis rite is widespread in the eastern United States, and it is known by some as the *Great Medicine Rite* (Hall 1997, 59–74; Weeks 2009). The culmination of this great rite is the adoption ritual where Stone and the Grey Wolf gave the war captive, the Great Serpent, as a replacement husband to First Woman (Hall 1997, Arguments for the Age of Serpent Mound 10–13, 32–5, 50–58). This adoption ritual was the foundation for the next rite, the most important, *Mo*^{n}*-Thi*^{n}*-Ka-Ga'-Xe*, or *The Making of the Earth*. This ritual, the coital act between First Woman, the spirit of the Earth, and the Great Serpent has enormous symbolic significance throughout North America. Alice Kehoe (1970) and Alfred Bowers (1950) have extensively documented these sexual rites known as 'walking with the buffalo'. The participating women passed this power directly to their husbands through intercourse and indirectly to their people, enabling them to enjoy increased power in warfare and hunting (Bowers 1950, 284).

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