'What Makes Indians Laugh'
Surrealism, Ritual, and Return in Steven Yazzie and Joseph Beuys

Claudia Mesch
Arizona State University

In 2009 Steven Yazzie, a Navajo/Laguna Pueblo artist, began the painting series "Coyote Interiors." The series references the figure of Coyote from Native American stories, whom it depicts roaming in various settings. In a manner consistent with the Indian Coyote narratives, Yazzie's Coyote figure tests the limits of any boundary, including those of artistic mediums, whether performance or painting. Produced that same year, Yazzie's sepia-toned photogravure *Tsosido Sweep Dancer* presents a tall figure on a makeshift stage (Fig. 1). A male dancer figure bends purposefully, broom frozen in mid-sweep, clad in sneakers and black socks, bare-chested, wearing a rug, his head topped with a donkey mask. To his right a taxidermied coyote poses on a small platform in mid-stride.

Yazzie's *Tsosido Dancer* recalls the stagings of Native American mythology or ritual repeatedly recorded in modern art. Specifically, Yazzie's consciously old-fashioned photogravure is reminiscent of the evocative photographs of Native performances staged in the twentieth century by European scholars and artists as they sought or feigned interaction with the spirits and objects of Native American culture. The process of the western anthropologist's, or the artist-ethnographer's, appropriation of Native American figures, objects, and ritual, has a longer history within modernism, one that I will begin to trace here. Two primary models have described the "self-othering" of the western subject of these disciplines vis-à-vis the Other: the tradition of mimesis outlined by Michael Taussig; or that of empathetic perception, following Aby Warburg. Photography remains instrumental in both of these models. I am interested in the first instances when western cultural supremacy could no longer be declared along these lines, as in the later works of Max Ernst,

Claudia Mesch: claudia.mesch@asu.edu

Fig. 1. Steven Yazzie, *Tsosido Sweep Dancer*, 2009, courtesy of the artist

Lothar Baumgarten, and in Joseph Beuys' 1974 New York performance, *I Like America and America Likes Me*. In the latter work, and in Steven Yazzie's art, the Other asserts itself as a political subject by means of humor and mockery. I ultimately want to make the case that each of these artists' recourse to Native American objects surpasses the merely appropriative strategies of earlier work, including that of the Surrealists. These postwar artworks by Ernst, Beuys, Baumgarten, and Yazzie contain a comic element that invites laughter, a critical and therapeutic element that the ethnographer Pierre Clastres also describes as a distinctly political act.

This modernist, performative embrace of Indian ritual goes beyond the well-known collecting activities of Surrealists Paul Éluard (who did not leave France), André Breton, Max Ernst, and others such as Matta, Robert and Nina Lebel, Georges Duthuit, and Isabelle Waldberg. Their collecting practices were hardly uneducated: Waldberg and the Lebels studied, for instance, with Claude Levi-Strauss

at the New School for Social Research. With the exception of Éluard, all are said to have frequented the collections of the American Museum of Natural History, particularly to study its hall of the Northwest Coast. Breton and Ernst expanded their collections of Native American artifacts after they arrived in New York in 1941. The art historians Sophie Leclercq and Louise Tythacott have recounted how Native American objects played a key role for Breton and Éluard in Paris in Galerie Surréaliste exhibitions of 1926-7.[1] Leclercq observes the carefully calibrated visual juxtapositions they staged in the exhibitions, as well as within the layout of the journal *La Révolution surréaliste*. These presented Native American artifacts alongside surrealist paintings and exquisite corpse drawings. These presentations suggested a close relation between "primitive" or "savage" objects and the surrealist ones.[2] Even in these early manifestations of their fascination with Native, and often ritual, objects, the Surrealists strove to integrate not only their novel forms, but also their political implications. In 1936 Breton pinpointed this similarity as a source of the surrealist "crisis of the object," in an essay of that title that expanded his agenda of Surrealism to include material objects. The "crisis" in perception that Breton demands—and which he states is precipitated by the rise of rationalism as a lens with which to view and comprehend the physical world—makes it impossible henceforth to understand objects in any utilitarian way: "the object ceases to be fixed on the nearer side of thought itself and recreates itself on the farther side as far as the eye can reach."[3] In this essay, published in tandem with the "Surrealist Exhibition of Objects" at the Galerie Charles Ratton in 1936, Breton devised a classification of objects that bore traces of this crisis in perception in the sense that all were varieties of readymades and found objects, i.e., they were not conventional art objects created by the hand of the (western) artist. Such objects were instead discovered or recovered by initiates of the surrealist circle who were properly informed about their significance. Breton included in this grouping mathematical models, "interpreted objects—incorporated objects," and "savage objects," the latter referring specifically to "the most beautiful American and Oceanic fetishes and masks."[4]

As a sign of the importance he accorded Native American objects, Breton featured a Pueblo kachina doll in advertisements for the 1936 exhibition. He claimed these found objects had the power to pierce through "common sense (that) can only create the world of concrete objects on which its odious supremacy is based, although undermined and badly guarded on all sides."[5] Like the parallel strategies of automatism, collage, or the exquisite corpse, Breton claimed that such objects could unleash associations, connections, and forces that opened to the unconscious and that would ultimately change everyday life itself. While the specific theology of the kachina in Pueblo culture was likely unknown to Breton, he did know that the

artifact opened to Native American culture, a way of understanding the world, and a powerful notion of spirituality and interiority, that differed greatly from western notions of the art object. Perhaps Breton also thought that the sacred quality or aura—the transformational qualities these objects possessed because of their former ritualistic use— might also be transferred to Surrealism.

Tythacott argues that Breton and Ernst's marginalized status as refugees in the U.S., their new residence during and after the war, led them to identify with equally marginalized Native Americans. It compelled them to travel to remote locations such as the Artic Circle, in Breton's case, and, in Ernst's case,to Hopi and Zuni reservations in the American Southwest. Perhaps the rarity of Native American objects in Europe during the 1930s also increased the Surrealists' fascination with them. Travel has been recognized as an activity central to Breton and the Surrealists. Breton and others like Max Ernst continued the kind of intellectual tourism that Paul Gauguin and Aby Warburg earlier engaged in, and that was perhaps initially inspired by the work of anthropologists such as Franz Boas and the general rise of tourism in the western United States.[6] Nonetheless, as his 1936 essay makes clear, Breton had charted the association he sought for Surrealism with Native artifacts well before he arrived in the U.S.

Ernst's son Jimmy recounts that the artist had already purchased numbers of katsinas at the Fred Harvey Trading Post at the Grand Canyon during his trip across the country with Peggy Guggenheim in 1941. James Thrall Soby's photographs, made in the spring of the following year in New York, show Ernst arranging and posing with this new collection. He continued to purchase both katsinas and Northwest coast artifacts from German immigrant Julius Carlebach's curio/antiques shop on 3rd Avenue, which Elizabeth Cowling says Ernst discovered first and tried unsuccessfully to keep secret from others such as Breton. Carlebach facilitated, moreover, Ernst and the others' access to George Heye's set of "duplicates" of his core collection of artifacts (and which ultimately become the Museum of the American Indian).[7] Among Ernst's purchases from Carlebach in New York in the early '40s was a very large-scale (6 metres or so) Northwest Coast Kwakwaka'wakw house figure of Tzonoqua, the "wild woman of the woods" (Fig. 2).[8] Ernst and Dorothea Tanning placed this interior house post next to the entrance of their house at Capricorn Hill in Sedona, as a 1947 photograph shows, indicating that Ernst had the massive work shipped from Manhattan to Arizona.

These "New York Collections," as they are sometimes referred to, were facilitated and advised by Carlebach, Heye, and Levi-Strauss.[9] In addition to their desire to acquire Native American artifacts, the surrealist circle began to publish photographs of their collections in both *VVV* (initiated by David Hare) and *View*,

Fig. 2. Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning in front of their house, Capricorn Hill, Sedona, Arizona, 1947; photographer unknown (Max Ernst Archive, Paris) © 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

publications to which Levi-Strauss also contributed. At the same time Wolfgang Paalen in Mexico City published parts of the collections in his new journal, *Dyn*. Publication opened these works to public and scholarly study. These publications established a scholarly, anthropological focus for these Surrealist collectors. But as Tythacott argues, they also produced a public perception of a proprietary and independent, if admiring, relation between the Surrealists and Native American culture. In 1952 Breton already uses the infamous and slippery term "affinity" to describe this relation: "Monnerot in '*la poesie moderne et le sacre*' has proven brilliantly that affinities between surrealist thought and Indian thought, which I have been able to verify, remain as living and creative as ever."[10] One should, nonetheless, hesitate to ascribe universalizing aspects to the Breton's use of the term "affinity" (in contrast to William Rubin's use of the term in MoMA's infamous " 'Primitivism in Twentieth Century Art" exhibition of 1984). Provisionally, perhaps a political resonance is what remains most central to Breton's postwar primitivism, rather than a declaration of (cultural) universals.

There exists a significant body of photography that portrays Max Ernst with the collection of Native American objects he brought with him to Arizona in 1946. Many of these photographs were not published until recently. Exterior photographs document how Ernst and Tanning positioned objects from their collection around the exterior of their house, such as the Kwakwaka'wakw house post, which Ernst

Fig. 3. Max Ernst, Interior of Ernst/Tanning House with dolls, Capricorn Hill, Sedona, 1946, Photo, Andre de Dienes (Max Ernst Archives, Paris) © 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

juxtaposed with his own small and large friezes and an additional "mask frieze." Photos of the interior of his Sedona house show a careful installation of the katsinas and other artifacts, positioned next to the artists' paintings (Fig. 3). Their pattern of display both on the interior and exterior walls of the house consistently juxtapose Ernst's collection with his and Tanning's own works. This generally follows the style of display that Breton used in his apartment.[11]

Insofar as their documentary attention goes beyond the surrealist action of collecting into the realm of (recorded) performance, the set of photos produced by Ernst's friends Lee Miller and Roland Penrose during their visit to Sedona in August of 1946 are of great interest. They show Ernst both inside and outside the house at Oak Creek, a wash at many times of year, wearing and posing in various ways with what appears to be a Hopi Heheya mask (Fig. 4). This would square with Anthony and Roland Penrose's accounts of Ernst's travel to Hopi with them in August to see "a rain dance."[12] Hopi dances are only performed at certain time of year, and the end of August brings either the snake or the flute dance.[13] And while katsina dolls are sacred, the masks are even more so. In 1997 under NAGPRA, the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, thirty-seven katsina masks donated by the Fred Harvey Collection to the Heard Museum were repatriated as Hopi sacred objects. The Department of the Interior notice states that these are: "specific ceremonial objects [identified by representative of the Hopi Tribe] which are needed by traditional religious leaders for the practice of the Hopi religion by present-day adherents."[14]

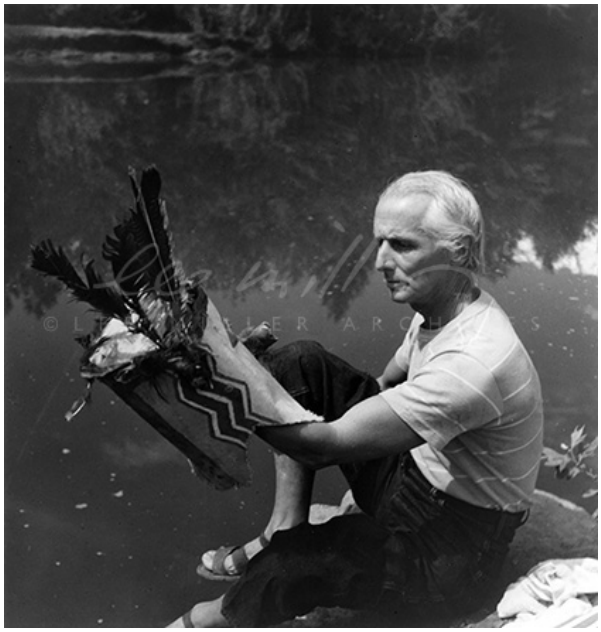

Fig. 4. Lee Miller, Max Ernst at Oak Creek, Sedona, Arizona, 1946 © Lee Miller Archives, England 2012. All rights reserved www.leemiller.co.uk

A close viewing of the mask Ernst wears indicates that it does not conform to the customary configuration of a Heheya Katsina. Jesse Walter Fewkes asked a Hopi artist to sketch the Heheya and other katsinas and described the Heheyas as "each with characteristic zigzag symbols on the face and with oblique eyes and mouth"[15] (Fig. 5). The incorrectly placed zigzag symbols, the crude eyes, and the strangely curved lower edges of the mask cut to fit onto Ernst's shoulders, suggest that this mask was likely Ernst's own work, an imitation of a mask and of dances he had recently observed on the Hopi mesas. He may have been aware of how sacred such objects were, and as a result, devised a kind of copy for himself that he would be able to use. Ernst consciously performs with this object as a kind of artistic fiction for the camera. It is also of interest that Ernst chose to pose bare-chested while he wore the mask, as he did in his more well-known portrait from this day by Miller. It is as though Ernst understood that his unclothed body, along with his association with these key artifacts, could carry over the authenticity of the Arizona landscape and the cultures it contained to his own persona as an artist. Ernst's positioning in the Arizona landscape was another element of authenticity that would have to be recorded and indexed by the camera.

Fig. 5. Sketch of Heheya and other katsinas from Jesse Walter Fewkes, *Hopi Katchinas Drawn by Native Artists* (Smithsonian Institution, 1903)

These imitative photographic images necessarily relate to other photographs that were for decades considered markers of Native authenticity: those "documents" of the "vanishing race" of Native Americans created by photographers of the American West such as Edward S. Curtis, among others. As Vine Deloria, Jr. has noted, these photographs functioned as "a weapon in the final skirmishes of cultural warfare in which the natives of North America could be properly and finally embedded in their place in the cultural evolutionary incline."[16] Deloria notes that Curtis' picturesque photographs of Indians "suggest a timeless reality in which nobility, integrity, and wisdom flourish and prosper," yet in doing so they put forward such a reality as historical, one that was already past—as Deloria puts it, "the history we would have liked to have possessed." The imitative photographs of European anthropologists and artists posing as Indians, on the other hand, ironically suggest a modern Indian culture of the present, one that, in terms of the images that define it, has literally been taken over by Europeans.[17] In other words, when photography put forward images of modern Indians, they were largely only those who were embodied by European mimicry, or, performed by European imitators of indigenous people.

As Samantha Kavky has discussed, Ernst's performance conforms in part to what Philip Deloria has identified as "modern/antimodern Indian

play," a special form of imitation or mimesis practiced by white ethnographers, journalists, hobbyists, and artists, or as Deloria calls them, "modernist Indians" or "primitivists."[18] Deloria has traced this convention back to the nineteenth century. Photography is likewise an essential instrument to this modernist form of "authentic" imitation. Drawing from the work of the anthropologist Michael Taussig, Deloria identifies this practice as a means whereby the (western, European) self is fully transformed into the Other in the act of bodily imitation and appropriation; but importantly, the mimicing has not only to encompass the details of the Other and his/her cultural practices, but also to demand that the detail be "possessed" through the photographic image.[19] Surely it was thought that cultures might be grasped cognitively in this way, and that such mimicking activity would contribute to the production of knowledge.

Hal Foster has described the mimetic performance convention of "modern/anti-modern Indian play" as "self-othering." While Foster does not mention them, the photographic images of Franz Boas posing as an Inuit hunter also come to mind, as well as the photographs of the German art historian Aby Warburg posing with katsina dancers in Oraibi in May, 1896; in one famous image, Warburg is shown wearing a mask. Fifty years later this kind of photographic image had become impossible for Ernst. Early photographers were especially keen to witness and capture in photographic images the obscure and sometimes spectacular events of Native ceremonies such as the Hopi snake dance, which proved to be one of the most popular photographic subjects for tourists in the American West.[20] In some of these nineteenth century photographs the number of European onlookers far outnumber the Native people present. One photograph from Oraibi in 1897 (a year after Warburg's visit) clearly shows a white photographer casually joining the line of Hopi Antelope priests without looking up from his camera (which was of course captured by a second photographer). Lyon notes that such abuses led to the first restrictions on photography of the Hopi Snake Dance at Walpi in August of 1913, when permits began to be issued. Some photographers actively tried to skirt these regulations.[21] By the late 1980s, of the 34 tribal groups who performed ceremonies, 21 prohibited photography.

Therefore it is likely that Lee Miller was not allowed to use her camera during the group's visit to Hopi in August of 1946. This prohibition enforced a relation of respect on the part of white visitors toward the sacredness of the ceremonies, and discouraged superficial photographic appropriation of Hopi rituals. Max Ernst's demonstration/performance might at least in part have been geared to his friends as entertainment, since it is part of a series of photographs that alternatively depict the group clowning and Ernst alone, posing seriously for Miller's

camera. But Ernst's refashioning of a mask he could not otherwise possess—and this is what I believe transpired—reveals the limits of surrealist collecting, and marks an end to a dominant modernist pattern of mimetic encounter with the Other. Ernst's performance signals an end to the authority of self-othering in modernism. Ernst's fictional mask and his quasi-comical "documentary" photos self-consciously acknowledge their own inauthenticity. Ernst points to the fact that in Arizona the Other has, for him, become a self-determining absence, a *political* subject with the power to prohibit its own possession and appropriation both ethnographically and artistically/perceptually. Because of this refusal, the Other prevents its "reabsorb[tion] as a primal stage in individual history," as Foster says, in the sense that Freudian psychoanalysis defines the primitive as an stage in construction of the Western, European self. In part, Ernst's overdetermined performance photographs critique ethnographic authority and its photographic methods. Secondly, it must be remembered that he had recently fallen from the graces of Peggy Guggenheim, and by extension the New York art world. Twice displaced and homeless when he first returned to Sedona, his previous sense of self had come to an end. Ernst surely also sought a kind of individual abreaction through Native American objects and ritual.

Ernst's *Capricorn*, first molded and cast in concrete in Sedona in 1948 and considered one of his most important sculptures, also touches upon the artist's self-conscious negotiation with Native American art. While it has been claimed that elements of the sculpture make reference to the forms contained in Ernst's own katsina dolls or to his Kwakwaka'wakw house post—particularly in the king's head on the left, or in the gesture revealing of a small head in his left hand—Western elements are far more pronounced.[22] Although I cannot present my entire argument about this here, Ernst minimizes his use of Native American motifs in the composition. Instead, he references Norse or Greek forms in the king, or possibly horned-goat-headed depictions of the devil in tarot images; and he invokes Cycladic forms in the queen figure on the right, along with other motifs that he explored in the relief sculptures that decorated the Sedona house. Ernst commemorated the landscape in the sculpture's title, since a hill behind the house was called "Capricorn Hill." With Native lands and people all around him, Ernst had by 1948 become more sensitive to the problems inherent in western appropriations of Native art.

Tensions between such desires for psychic wholeness—and for ethnographic authenticity through mimicry and possession— and the recognition of the impossibility of such fantasies continued to surface in the work of white artists generations later. This problematic seems particularly critical within German culture, which has a long history of epistemological grappling with the Other in anthropology. Lothar Baumgarten, the son of an anthropologist, is perhaps best

known for his postcolonial conceptual installations. Baumgarten even completed fieldwork in that he lived with the Yanomami people in the Orinoco region of Venezuela for eighteen months. Another artist working in the U.S., Juan Downey, had also lived with this tribe a few years earlier, which was known one of the world's most "remote" and removed from the West (see also Hjorleifur Jonsson's feature review on Downey in this issue). In his singular 1972 work *Makunaima* (Fig. 6), Baumgarten approached a possibly surrealist-tinged critique of mimicry and ethnography. As has been noted, it is the only work in which Baumgarten takes on the photographic conventions of the modernist Indian and shaman-figure, and it precedes Beuys's coyote performance in *I Like America* by two years. It is, in my view, another darkly comic image that parallels Ernst's. Unfortunately, Baumgarten's other works display less humor: *America Invention* of 1988-1993, a temporary installation at the Guggenheim in New York, takes language as its medium, in inscribing the space with the names of tribes that have faced extinction with words like "abandoned, plundered, baptized." With perhaps a noble intention to memorialize, Baumgarten invokes another convention here— that of the West announcing the inevitability of the decline of indigenous peoples— insofar as he represents them in language in the passive voice. Baumgarten visited Arizona, and in his text "The Trickster," he describes his encounter there with (a) coyote in the middle of one night.[23] Unlike Beuys, Baumgarten understands the sacred quality of the coyote-trickster, and is conscious of the nature his own attraction to Native American culture: "I have always been interested in the other…the societies without a state—and in the historical and social cohesion…which maintains a common thought process in mankind…"[24]

Baumgarten's more ethnographically informed stance—he was clearly familiar with Pierre Clastres' work of the '70s—is quite unlike that of Beuys, who held a parallel interest in anthropology but took an almost wholly intuitive approach to aspects of Native American culture. It has been suggested that Beuys may have drawn some of his ideas about Native American culture from the writings of the German adventure novelist Karl May, and that his interest in Coyote was likely precipitated by Baumgarten's experience in Arizona. Beuys pursued his interest in the transformational role of the shaman in drawings dating back to 1954. He realized this role creatively in key performances of the mid-'60s, such as *The Chief*, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare,* and *Eurasia*. The role is arguably also central in reinforcing aspects of Beuys' personal mythology, or what Peter Nisbet has called "The Story." The performances reveal Beuys' familiarity, as early as 1964, with the general description of the shaman's range of action.[25] The shaman is a priest and a healer of illness and trauma; he journeys to the sphere of the spirits in order

Fig. 6. Lothar Baumgarten, *Makunaima*, 1972 © 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

to negotiate with them what people must do to rectify things like bad weather. A shaman is initiated to this service through a particular process. This occurs in dreams and visions, and often coincides with experiencing a grave illness and falling into a coma, which compel the shaman-initiate to go off into the wilderness, where he imagines being taken to the house of the spirits. The spirits often kill the initiate, whereupon he is then restored to life and wholeness. The sprits then give the gift of a substance or magic object that is added to the shaman's body, like a quartz crystal, or, in Beuys' version, the materials felt and "fat," which feature so prominently in his art. This gift is a token of the shaman's newly possessed powers, and which he can continue to access. In North America the helpers of the shaman are often animal spirits, and the shaman mimics their cries and movements in a dance. He uses music to summon these divine helpers and enter a trance that begins his journey to the land of the spirits.[26] Beuys was careful to construct his "story," or his personal mythology involving his shaman-like resurrection—his alleged rescue from plane crash in the Crimea during World War II by nomadic Tartars (and many actual Tartars practiced shamanism)—around many aspects of the path of the shaman I've just summarized. In the three performances of the mid-'60s I've mentioned, Beuys restages the

resurrection/shaman transformation, wherein he attempts to communicate with the spirit world through the mediation of a hare (later, in *Iphigenie/Titus Andronicus,* he gives this role to a horse).

But Beuys' most famous action, *I Like America America Likes Me* (1974), is another matter. In it Beuys shared a stage with a live coyote at René Block's Manhattan gallery. Never touching American ground until he entered the coyote's space, Beuys came from Kennedy airport in an ambulance, again shrouded in felt as he had been at the Rene Block Gallery in West Berlin ten years earlier. Beuys and the coyote from New Jersey, named "Little John," shared the space, and together they reworked Beuys' materials of felt, newspaper, and straw over three days, with Beuys-as-shaman seeking communication and transformation (Fig. 7). As Herbert Wietz' film of the performance indicates, Beuys repeated various activities, such as enveloping himself completely in felt, with only a staff peeking out; he also repeated various sounds and music, including a recording of engine turbines and his striking of a triangle. The coyote investigated the space; Beuys seemed to interest him most when he was wrapped in the felt. We know though Caroline Tisdall's account that the coyote urinated and defecated on Beuys' carefully arranged copies of the *Wall Street Journal*. We can safely assume that he peed on Beuys' bolts of felt too. He chewed on, tossed around, and rolled himself on gloves Beuys wore at points; he looked out the window onto the Manhattan street below; he stared at the crowd and the clicking cameras on the other side of the enclosure in the gallery. When Beuys tried to pick up the coyote, he wriggled free immediately, bounding away.

One might productively consider Beuys' encounter with a mythical creature from Native culture in light of Aby Warburg's notion of "psycho-mimeses," Philipp Ekardt's intriguing term for Warburg's incomplete, sprawling notion of empathetic perception, or mimesis-as-perception. My remarks on this connection are exploratory and speculative, given the complexity of Warburg's writings on the subject. Like Beuys, Warburg had a universalizing and arguably anthropological thrust to his notion of art. Warburg notably developed several key concepts in his fragmentary theory of mimesis (it is more accurately a theory of visual culture) in his 1923 essay on the Hopi snake dance, "A Lecture on the Serpent Ritual," which he wrote almost 30 years after his visit to Oraibi in 1896. He was still articulating this idea in the instruction to his final project, the *Mnemosyne-Atlas*. Warburg scholars such as Ekardt, Matthew Rampley, Georges Didi-Huberman, and Philippe-Alain Michaud, have forwarded tantalizing extrapolations of Warburg's notes and fragmentary texts on mimesis; all draw extensively from Warburg's delivered lecture of his paper in Kreuzlingen in 1923.[27]

Fig. 7. Joseph Beuys, *I like America America Likes Me*, 1974 © 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

Rampley and Didi-Huberman argue that Warburg was influenced by the discourse on mimesis that was predominant in nineteenth-century anthropology and related to the notion of primitive magic, beginning with Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871; German translation 1873). Warburg's interest in travelling to Oraibi and San Ildefonso, where he witnessed the Antelope dance, had to do with his witnessing of a ritual, an ancient and pagan mimetic transformation: "When the Indian in his mimetic costume imitates, for instance, the expressions and movements of an animal, he insinuates himself into an animal form not out of fun but, rather, to wrest something magical from nature through the transformation of his person, something he cannot attain by means of his unextended and unchanged personality."[28] In witnessing the hemiskachina dance at Oraibi, Warburg understood that masking involved a necessary loss of self; it made an act of "social piety" and a religious and "symbolic connection" possible.[29] Ekardt notes that Warburg also drew from visual empathy theory (or empathetic aesthetics) developed by Robert Vischer, an early twentieth-century German philosopher who worked on aesthetics and "*Einfühlung*" ("feeling in"). For Vischer, the moment of (empathetic) mimesis is, in Ekardt's words, "an encounter between subject and object of perception as bodily entities."[30] Warburg extended this aesthetics of empathy to the understanding and

perception/reading of ancient Greek representations of bodily movement, as well as to understanding movement within aspects of mimesis in Native dances in the Southwest. Warburg sees that the snake of the Hopi snake dance is "magico-causally" connected, in Hopi belief, with the flash of lightening that accompanies rain, because of physical semblance (verticality, serpentine shape). He understands that setting or establishing that magical and mythological link of semblance allows the Hopi to enact "causal comportment" or"mimesis through communion with/entering into the object."[31] The setting of resemblance, a "second magical relation," then has to do with imputing human influence and actual causation of "the phenomenon to be conjured" or the desired outcome, such as, for example, rain. Warburg writes, "It is here a question of establishing a bond between natural force and man, of creating a symbol as the connecting agent, indeed as the magical rite that achieves integration by sending out a mediator…"[32]

In the *I Like America* action, Beuys did not initiate a mimetic transformation into an animal spirit. He displaced himself to North America in order to witness the living experience and bodily "gestures" of the coyote, in an extended act of perception that brought his body in close physical proximity with that of the animal. At numerous points in the performance, Beuys was completely concealed or masked in the swathes of felt that he had placed in the cage; at these moments in the performance he too suspended a sense of self. Perhaps this is what Beuys meant in calling this performance a "reckoning with the coyote," or an attempt to establish, in Warburg's terms, the "connecting agent," the living coyote in the Block Gallery, and to "wrest" something magical from him (i.e., nature). Or, further, through this extended visual perception of the coyote over several days, to stage a "communion" with or "enter into the object" and thereby to realize a "magic action that produces a real link." Perhaps Beuys thought that the recovery he wished from "the whole American trauma" could be influenced by reason of his close encounter with the coyote-body, and become just such a magical action. Of course one would ask why Beuys chose not to travel to Native land and witness Native people's religious or shamanistic practices in the way Warburg did, and thereby limit his role to that of an observer and not become a vague imitator—which is not on the level of true mimesis—of the dynamics of Native ritual. The latter impulse continues a modernist relation to the Other. In many ways Beuys was still very much part of this modernist legacy.

After his New York performance Beuys grandly pronounced, "I made contact with the psychological trauma point of the United States' energy constellation: the whole American trauma with the Indian, the Red Man…a reckoning has to be made with the coyote and only then can this trauma be lifted."[33]

As in his past performances, it is clear that this reckoning had just as much to do with Beuys' own personal trauma and the violence of war, which he had experienced in his own life. In his excellent iconographic analysis of this action, David Levi-Strauss proposes that the traveler/hare Beuys may have sought transformation from the trickster coyote in New York.[34]

But as is the case in all of Beuys' art—and this holds for Baumgarten's works as well, which address the traumatic effects of colonialism on indigenous people—the lifting of trauma could only remain an attempt. The reckoning was powerful, beyond what Beuys recognized. In *I Like America* Beuys succeeds, largely unintentionally and as a result of his partnering with (the) coyote-as-trickster, in unraveling much of his own authority and persona as shaman. The action is part of the decisive political turn in his performance practice. Before 1974 Beuys' political actions were marked by the use of blackboards and long speeches and discussions with an audience; these seem very distinct from his "primal" or shamanistic performances. In *I Like America*, Beuys touches upon the deeply political role of the trickster-coyote in Native American societies, one that Pierre Clastres has outlined in his discussion of politics in the Native American "society without a state." Despite Tisdall's brief mention of Jung's comments on the "trickster archetype" in her 1976 book on *I Like America*, it appears that Beuys was not aware of the complex and indeed parodic/political role of the trickster in Native American folklore, since he never mentioned the trickster figure explicitly in any of his extensive comments on this performance.

Mac Linscott Ricketts mentions that even while one is a mythological figure and the other is an actual ideology of spiritual experience, the trickster and the shaman in Native societies are similar in that they both forward the belief that the world is suffused with powers and figures that may at times be helpful to humans, and at other times dangerous. But the trickster differs greatly from the shaman in how he goes about dealing with these powers and figures. Whereas the shaman actually befriends the spirits he respects, the trickster distrusts the entire spiritual sphere, seeing it as unfriendly to the will of humans. As many narratives about Coyote relate, the trickster has to finagle—through his own wits, cleverness, and, in the end, deceitfulness—to get anything at all out of the spirits, such as fire and game. Ricketts argues that in a number of stories the trickster/coyote functions as a kind of parody of the authenticity of shamanistic experience and behavior. Disaster often results when Coyote overreaches and tries to mimic the special powers of other beings or animals, as in the famous story of the "bungling host".[35] In that story Coyote attempts to imitate Kingfisher's method of fishing and kills himself in the process. Ricketts catalogues numerous other Native American stories from the

Southwest and the Plains that end in a similarly disastrous way (though it must be remembered that Coyote is also the creator). He determines that the shaman and the trickster are opposing figures, and suggests that the trickster's value as an important and often bungling figure has to do with teaching people to "endur[e]…the absurdity of human existence."[36]

In his book *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*, published in France in the same year as the *I Like America* performance, Clastres notes that certain South American indigenous narratives or myths, in their parodying of the shaman figure, have an additional function in tribal society. These myths works to lessen, through laughter and mockery, the intimidating power of the shaman who is a powerful figure of the tribe: "we see emerge a cathartic function of the myth…in its narration it frees one of the Indians' passions, the secret obsession to laugh at what one fears. It devalues on the plane of language a thing that cannot be taken lightly in reality, and manifesting in laughter an equivalent of death, it instructs us that among the Indians, ridicule kills."[37] These myths are important to Clastres' assertion that political power is universal and must not be measured against Euro- and ethnocentric notions that identify tribal societies as "underdeveloped," as apolitical civilizations simply because they lack the hierarchies and institutions, as well as the ideology of obedience, characteristic of the (centralized Western) state. They also cannot be measured against classical Marxist notions of base, structure, and superstructure; Clastres here also refutes Marx's economic determinism: that is, the claim that only those societies with an economy and a resulting class differentiation develop a political structure. Clastres notes that even in societies where a chief is present, his power is fragile and humble, and relies on shifting group opinion. He is constantly challenged and tested. His political power "depends on the good will of the group" which can end at any time. This politics marks a society that "manifests its will to preserve that primitive social order […] by refusing to allow an individual, central, separate power to arise."[38]

The figure of Coyote, as one who makes Indians laugh in a serious way, similarly serves to regulate an earthly, decentralized social and political order. As is always true of Coyote, the coyote in *I Like America* must then be seen as the spoiler in Beuys' staged encounter. Little John literally pissed on and tore away at Beuys' shaman-tinged garb, and stared at the cameras, the street below, and the audience, breaking the illusion and dispelling the absorption that Beuys tried to generate in his viewers then and now. Much in the same way, mythical Coyote dismantles the authority and comfortable sense of resolving the "trauma of the Red Man" that Beuys sought as a self-declared shaman in the U.S. in 1974. The performance underscores that after Surrealism, artistic appropriation of Native figures, objects,

and ritual, even largely symbolic ones, begin to serve different ends. The alterity of modernist "rituals of self-othering" that Foster described as a standard artistic device for transformation of the self returns as a critical field where the Other resists, challenges, and even mocks its would-be appropriators. In taking on newly comical traits, the mimicking behavior that once sealed a power relation in favor of the European artist-ethnographer instead becomes a process whereby the agency and *political* nature of the Other, or the Other as a political subject, is asserted. Laughter becomes a political tool; it transforms displays of artistic and political authority into spectacles of individual power losing its grip.

Perhaps Coyote's deeply political role is another reason why Steven Yazzie has turned to focus on the figure. For him it is a figure that bridges what is usually seen as two distinct and separate processes: the projecting of the prehistoric/

Fig. 8. Steven Yazzie, *Death of the Curator*, 2009, courtesy of the artist

primitive (Other) as an (interiorized) unconscious; and the projecting of the prehistoric/primitive (Other) as an (exteriorized) political "reality." Yazzie enlists the figure of Coyote as a means to investigate his own identity, and as a marker for the continual rejection of the social/political status quo and towards establishing something else controlled by the group or community. Yazzie understands this group as having to do not only with the Native American community, but also with a entire mix of cultures that have established a sense of place in the Southwest. He is aware of the risks contained in the figure of Coyote, as a visual cliché of the Southwest, but at the same time a sacred figure for the Navajo who also have a number of taboos in place about him; he is a sign of responsibility to this heritage. Yazzie's "Coyote Interior" paintings position the coyote both in very private realms, as in *Green Chair*, and in public space, as in *Death of the Curator* (2009; Fig. 8), wherein Yazzie, in a moment of modernist self-reflexivity, depicts him trotting casually past a painting within the painting. Coyote thus becomes a kind of index of place and of the land, a reminder that consistent adaptability is necessary to survival in a place like the Arizona desert. I have already mentioned that the *Tsosido Sweep Dancer* series of 2009 (Fig. 1) presents a studiously artificial in-studio theatrical tableau, a stage within a stage. The photographs contain a character Yazzie originated, the "Tsosido sweep dancer," who takes Yazzie's father's nickname. The figure embodies an absence which Yazzie uses to reference a largely unknown person, yet also a still-forming notion of (Navajo) self. It is a deeply interiorized investigation. But it is one in which Coyote, in a stiffened and taxidermied form but still the iconoclastic trickster spirit, serves as an accomplice. Yazzie points to the ultimate tenuousness of the entire venture, and to the fact that even this major psychic absence must be taken with some measure of humor and laughter. His art points to the possibility that the Other as a site of artistic exploration can in some instances lead to the discovery of a deep, if fantasized and slippery, sense of self. It can also reference the ideal of a politically decentralized society that one might someday inhabit.

1 See Louise Tythacott, *Surrealism and the Exotic* (London: Routledge, 2003), and Sophie Leclercq, "The Surrealist Appropriation of the 'Indigenous' Arts," *Arts & Societies* (November 23, 2006), available online at http://www.artsetsocietes.org/a/a-leclercq.html.
2 See Leclercq.
3 André Breton, "Crisis of the Object" (1936), reprinted in André Breton, *Surrealism and Painting* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2002), 277.
4 Tythacott, 40.
5 Breton, "The Crisis of the Object," in *Surrealists on Art*, ed. Lucy Lippard (New Jersy; Prentice Hall, 1970), 54; originally published in *Cahiers d'Art* 2, No. 1-2 (1936): 21-22; 24, 26.
6 Such as Roger Cardinal's essay, "Breton's Travels," in Elza Adamowicz, ed., *Surrealism: Crossings/Frontiers* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 17-38.
7 See Marie Mauzé, "Surrealists in Exile," *Collection Robert Lebel* (Paris: Drouot-Richelieu, 2006), 17-18; 20-29.
8 Ernst's house post was originally likely to have been a supporting or interior house post since its top is not rounded. In Kwakwaka'wakw myths Tzonoqua possesses great wealth and is prized as a bestower of wealth. In masks and posts, as in Ernst's, she is often depicted with pursed lips and about to make a sound (some Kwakwaka'wakw stories identify the sound of the wind through the trees as the cry of Tzonoqua). She is however feared by children since she is known to steal them in order to eat them. The post begs the question of why, among other figures and artifacts, Ernst found the figure of Tzonoqua of such importance.
9 There is much work that remains to be done in tracing the provenance of Ernst's extensive collection of Northwest Coast and Southwest Native objects. Ernst's house post, for example, may once have been part of Captain D.F. Tozier's infamous collection (and housed at the Ferry Museum in Tacoma, Washingon). It may possibly have been acquired by Frederick Dockstader, and thus made its way to Dockstader's Museum of the American Indian in New York. These objects were often traded between collectors, and either Ernst or Carlebach may have come by the house post via Dockstader in this fashion. I am pursuing this line of inquiry in my upcoming book. See also Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985). Further research is needed into the provenance of Ernst's collection of katsina dolls. I am indebted to Prof. Kate Duncan for this information.
10 Breton quoted by Tythacott, 157.
11 See Tythacott. See also the essay by Katharine Conley, "What Makes a Collection

Surrealist?" in this issue.
12 See Antony Penrose's comments in *Max Ernst Life and Work*, ed. Werner Spies (New York: DuMont and Thames & Hudson, 2005), 194, and Penrose cited by Tythacott, 159.
13 It needs to be confirmed whether a Heheya katsina would indeed appear at Home Dance—the ceremony when the katsinas return home to the San Francisco Mountains in August, and likely the one that Ernst and his friends attended. The ceremony is Niman (also called Home Dance) and currently takes place earlier than August; however it may possibly have taken place in August, 1946.
14 "Department of the Interior Notice of Intent to Repatriate Cultural Items in the Possession of the Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ," *Federal Register* (January 29, 1997), (Volume 62, Number 19); available at http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/fed_notices/nagpradir/nir0050.html.
15 Jesse Walter Fewkes, *Hopi Katcinas* (New York: Dover, 1985), 73. I am grateful to Kate Duncan for introducing me to some of the literature on this topic.
16 Vine Deloria, Jr., "Introduction," Christopher M. Lyman, *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis* (New York: Pantheon, in association with the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), 11. I thank Thomas Swenson for this reference.
17 Vine Deloria, Jr., 12.
18 B. Samantha Kavky, "Max Ernst in Arizona: Myth, Mimesis and the Hysterical Landscape," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 57/58 (Spring/Autumn 2010): 209-228.
19 Deloria, 118-120.
20 Luke Lyon describes the Hopi Snake ceremony as a "major photographic opportunity" for tourists in the 1890s. See Luke Lyon, "History of Prohibition of Photography of Southwestern Indian Ceremonies," in *Reflections: Papers on Southwestern Culture History*, ed. Anne Van Arsdall Poore (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press and the Archaeological Society of New Mexico, 1988), 238.
21 For example, Lyon recounts that crews began to arrive to film the ceremonies; in 1913 a Pathé film of the ceremony at Walpi, with former president Theodore Roosevelt and the sitting governor of the Arizona territory, W.P. Hunt in attendance, was smuggled off Hopi by the director, Victor Miller, who had not signed an agreement with the tribe. The film is in the Library of Congress. Lyon, 241-242.
22 See particularly Charlotte Stokes, "The Thirteenth Chair: Max Ernst's Capricorn," *Arts Magazine* 62 (October, 1987): 88-93.
23 Baumgarten writes: "A coyote was standing right in front of me…Then he faced me again…Coyote, the restless wanderer, had just passed by." Baumgarten, "The Trickster," *Carbon* (Los Angeles, 1991), 3-5.

24 Baumgarten, cited in Petra Richter, *Mit, neben, gegen: die Schüler von Joseph Beuys* (Düsseldorf, Richter Verlag, 2000), 222, note 909.
25 Based on the general description provided by Mircea Eliade in *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (New York: Pantheon, 1964), cited by Ricketts, 88-94.
26 I have drawn this admittedly limited description of shamanism from Mac Linscott Rickett's summary, presented in his essay, "The Shaman and the Trickster," in *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms*, ed. William J. Hynes and William G. Doty (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993).
27 Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante. Histoire de l'art et temps des fantomes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 2002), and "The Surviving Image: Aby Warburg and Tylorian Anthropology," *Oxford Art Journal* 25:1 (2002): 59-70; Philipp Ekardt, "Sensing—Feeling—Imitating. Psycho-Mimeses in Aby Warburg," *ilinx* No. 2 (2011), eds. Eva Johach, Jasmin Mersmann and Evke Rulffes: 102-121; Matthew Rampley, "Mimesis and Allegory: On Aby Warburg and Walter Benjamin," in *Art History as Cultural History: Warburg's Projects*, ed. Richard Woodfield (Amsterdam: G+B Arts 2001), 121-150; Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: Zone Books, 2004).
28 Aby Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, trans. Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 18-19.
29 Warburg, 19.
30 Ekardt, 118.
31 Warburg, cited by Ekardt, 118.
32 Warburg, 32.
33 Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1979), 228.
34 David Levi Strauss, "American Beuys," in *between dog & wolf, Essays on Art and Politics* (New York: Autonomedia, 1999): available online at http://www.bockleygallery.com/css/american_beuys.html
35 See Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth and Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).
36 Ricketts, "The Shaman and the Trickster," 105.
37 Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology* (New York: Zone Books, 1986), 146-7.
38 Clastres, 37 and 212.