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Who cares? Museum conservation between colonial violence and symbolic repair

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ABSTRACT

Recently, museums have been under growing scrutiny. The public debate has focused mainly on two things: The way cultures and objects are presented and displayed in museum galleries and the questions of restitution. However, 80–99% of a museum's collection is and will probably remain in storage. This paper changes the focus from exhibition or restitution to conservation, understood as a set of practices preserving and giving access to art and material culture. More precisely, I study preventative conservation and collection management as political actions. Building upon the unvaluable work carried by conservators in the US and beyond, but also including other voices and alternative gestures, I aim to start a conversation about what conservation could be in a postcolonial museum.

KEYWORDS

Conservation; healing; coloniality; storage; collection; management

Since the 1980s, a large body of research from the fields of anthropology, museum studies, and art history has underscored the political dimension of museums. Exhibits and exhibition galleries have been studied as sites of nonneutral representation and vectors of political discourse, even though the latter is rarely explicitly or verbally formulated by such institutions. At the same time, the history of collections has been enriched by an approach that notably questions the provenance of artifacts, particularly in so-called ethnographic museums. Inspired by the concept of “necropolitics” that Achille Mbembe developed in his book of the same name, Dan Hicks asserts that a necrography of collections must highlight the crimes that lie at their roots (Hicks, 2020; Mbembe, 2003). In this paper, I propose to shift the focus of current conversations around the provenance, exhibition, depiction or restitution of artifacts towards conservation. I define conservation as a set of cultural and technological practices aiming to preserve and give access to art and material culture. Such practices, in particular those connected to collections management and preventative conservation, are sometimes seen as mostly technical, unpolitical, and, *ad minima*, unavoidable. However, even less visible museum spaces such as storage facilities are not neutral (Brusius & Singh, 2017; Peers, 2013). I argue that the ways in which artworks are preserved can repair (or further damage) collections. Today, museums are transitioning from a logic of keeping to an ethic of caring.¹ In this context, conservation is more than a Western science born in Europe in the 1950s. Indeed, conservation can encompass different gestures aiming to repair objects, but also people and stories. Ultimately, this

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perspective allows us to enlarge and decenter conservation in order to include a wider variety of actions. Thus, instability, change and loss are sometimes the best ways of caring for a collection.

Collection management and preventative conservation as political actions

In a recent “conversation piece” published in *British Art Studies* in February of 2021, the author, artist, and activist Priya Basil suggests that something is missing from the necrography proposed by Hicks and others. Necrography tells the history of the oppressors, of wars, theft, rape. Indeed, it is a history of facts that are preserved in the records. But that which is missing and proves resistant, where does that fit in? Where should we place imagination, reappropriation, the absent? Can history be written above a void? And can that narrative put things right, atone for the past? Basil is pinning her hopes on the emergence of a “fabulography” in museums; that is, a narrative in which all forms (dance, music, gesture, etc.) would be explored when writing potential stories that straddle the spaces left empty by traditional sources. It is not just a question of telling the complete story, the full history, “the whole picture,” as Alice Procter’s book puts it (Procter, 2020), but of relating other stories and another broader history:

Picture the museum that opens up to such a process, a kind of cultural Truth and Reconciliation Commission: inviting people and artists in communities from which belongings were taken, as well as other artists and even museum visitors, to share – through exchanges, workshops, displays – in shaping other kinds of landscapes for belonging ... A space of reparation – if it might really be possible, as Hartman proposed, “to consider stories as a form of compensation or even as reparations, perhaps the only kind we will ever receive” (Basil, 2021)

In the same series of articles published by *British Art Studies*, anthropologist Haidy Geismar notes that a necrography of collections runs the risk of privileging once again the voices of museum curators or directors, who are often, as she goes on to point out, white men in positions of power. For Geismar, stories of resistance and resilience can spring from a narrative centered on the objects themselves, thus defending the concept of the “object’s biography” (Geismar, 2021).² As she observes, the author and researcher Gerald Vizenor speaks of “survivance” to characterize what gets repaired and reformulated (Vizenor, 1994, 2008). In the museum world, this concept has been used, for example, in an official communiqué on the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., in 2004 (Madsen, 2007, p. 140). The *Our Lives* exhibition (September 21, 2004 - July 6, 2005) includes the following text, “SURVIVANCE ... is more than survival. Survivance means redefining ourselves. It means raising our social and political consciousness.” As Vizenor puts it, “My storytellers, my characters have the power to heal through a good story ... they can heal and transform the wounded of a civilization.” (Vizenor & Coltelli, 1990-1991, p. 103)

The ability of museums to repair a wrong done in the past is often connected with the narrative formulated by the institution, to the discourse that is worked out and transmitted in the galleries. In the following parts of this paper, I would like to point to another way of repairing, or at the least limiting the violence that can be exercised in the space of the museum nowadays. This is not a matter (solely) of changing the architecture of the buildings, the exhibit labels, or the pieces on display, or even the narratives or the identity of

those who bear them. Rather collections management, and the active and preventative conservation of artworks and material culture in particular, can be a form of repair/reparation in the context of the museum. It would be a repair not via the narrative but rather through gestures and the gestural. Expanding on the texts mentioned earlier, I will take as a case-study the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., and especially its annex, the Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, Maryland. I will focus on the museum's conservation laboratories and its storage facilities, and not on the exhibition spaces or the building itself. Conservation can be a form of care or, conversely, violence wielded against the works. Finally, I will expand the scope of my study to consider alternative conservation practices, understood here in the broad sense of the term as having a potential for physical and symbolic repair/reparation. Conserving works in this regard occupies a singular place that falls between material and immaterial repair, and visible and invisible transformations.

To breathe or not to breathe? Conservation from oppression to healing

The world of ethnographic museums has gone through many transformations over the past few decades, especially in the United States, Canada, and Australia. For example, with the 1990s, American law, specifically the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), began to pressure a certain number of American museums and spurred changes in exhibition spaces and reserves. Concomitantly, conservators of several institutions acknowledged the importance of working with representatives of Indigenous peoples, despite the significant differences between the conservation norms advocated by the museums and the expectations of the Native Americans involved (Clavir, 2002; *First People and Artifacts*, 1992; Kreps, 2003; Lennard & Ewer, 2010; *Préserver le patrimoine autochtone*, 2008; Richmond & Bracker, 2009; Sully, 2007; Wharton, 2011). In these examples, the professionals agreed to follow the recommendations of Indigenous representatives, even if the latter's proposals ran counter to the professional ethics codes laid down by Western conservation.

Reflecting a similar mindset, a serious effort was made to consult Indigenous peoples of the United States prior to the opening of the new site of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. (inaugurated in 2004). Carried out by the architectural firm of Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates (VSBA), this work was documented and preserved in an extensive report titled *The Way of the People*. Drafted between 1991 and 1993, *The Way of the People* comprises three separate volumes, along with a binder containing an appendix. The first introduces the project through the consultations that were undertaken.³ The second presents the results concerning the Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, Maryland.⁴ The third details the museum's program in the architectural sense of the term,⁵ while the binder features the appendix of accompanying documents.⁶ I am interested in two parts in particular. They are, on the one hand, the twenty or so forms sent to the local museums; and on the other, an accompanying summary drawn up by Wendy Jessup and Associates, a firm specialized in questions concerning the preventative conservation of artifacts.⁷

The collections involved vary in terms of the materials used (skins and pelts, wood, paper, feathers, textile fibers, etc.). They are also fragile and likely to be prey to many species of insects, in particular wood-eating pests (xylophagous) and those that feast on

feathers and fur (keratinophagous). Until recently one of the preventative conservation practices favored by institutions was the use of insecticides often very liberally applied to the collections as a way of maintaining some control over destructive and hence unwanted insect guests – pest management in other words (Johnson et al., 2005, pp. 89–95). The storage areas of the Dahlem Museum in Germany, for example, are notorious for being highly toxic, with some of the shelves still closed to visitors due to previous chemical fumigation. As Lotte Arndt has shown, conservation’s literally toxic side not only contaminates the reserves, it also complicates restitution and the return of objects (Arndt, 2021). And the language of “infestation,” “pests,” “contamination,” and “disinfection” has a certain resonance with not only the biopolitics of totalitarian regimes, but also the necropolitics analyzed by Mbembe since it is a matter of deciding who lives and who dies.⁸

In the NMAI report, over half of the representatives consulted were not opposed to the so-called standard conservation practices. However, alternative approaches were suggested and, in some cases, applied. Smoke from burning wood or tobacco was proposed for preventing the proliferation of pests. Sylvena Mayer of the Sierra Mono Museum stated that “[s]tandard conservation practice, including freezing is ok, but would prefer traditional use of tobacco and cedar to keep bugs away.”⁹ The use of non-chemical smoke was also recommended during religious ceremonies, which are performed at the Cultural Resources Center as well as when objects first arrived at the Suitland venue. Besides the reserves themselves, the center has a space that is devoted to religious practices. From its very first design, the security (fire prevention) system was talked about in terms of allowing personnel to disconnect the different smoke sensors and, if necessary, unplug them to allow ceremonies in specific locations, be it inside the stores or in the space reserved for the performance of such ceremonies.¹⁰ And indeed when the collections were being transferred, certain objects were welcomed with traditional ceremonies, including the use of smoke from burning sage as the moving trucks arrived (Lenz, 2004, p.126 and p.133).

Storage is also discussed in light of Indigenous peoples’ expectations and demands. Another challenge, for example, which NMAI has been mindful of is the breathing of objects in the reserves. Anna Silas, the director of the Hopi Tribal Museum, asks that the collections not be stored in plastic. Rather, they have to be laid out on open shelves to allow them to breathe. “All sensitive materials should be on open shelves, ideally made of wood. No use of plastic bags to enclose objects. Cloth bags specially made for masks would be acceptable.”¹¹ According to the Zuni researcher Edmund J. Ladd, masks in particular have to be able to get oxygen, “It’s not the fact that the material actually breathes, but the fact that the spiritual content of it, the condition of it, has to breathe through some means of its own not to be hampered by plastic or being constrained by having it in a container.”¹² To respond to these demands, NMAI installed open shelving on which the objects could access fresh air. It also prefers disinfecting the collections by anoxia (that is, gradually eliminating and replacing the oxygen with nitrogen), as is the case at other museums (e.g. the Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris), but also by freezing. Indeed, the use of large freezers to eliminate insects is currently the solution favored by the Cultural Resources Center in Suitland.¹³ The freezers make it possible to kill insect pests at low temperatures and without the use of chemicals. Betty Cornelius of the Colorado River Indian Tribes Museum, explains that this procedure is better adapted than the

use of biocides, “We would not chemically fumigate or treat any objects but the use of freezing for pest control is ok.”¹⁴

At NMAI, the risk of pest infestation, to borrow terminology employed by museums, is heightened further because several Nations, especially in the Southwestern United States, want to be able to bring food to the objects.¹⁵ Indeed, in the report, for many of the people who were consulted the objects are alive and their needs are partially comparable to those of human beings (Étienne, 2018). Certain masks, for instance, must be fed and should not be stored in the dark.¹⁶ To take into consideration that collections are active and not inert implies a renewed relationship to storage that limits the violence perpetrated against the collections. This approach runs counter to a storage policy that, to conserve the artifacts, used to seek to maintain them in conditions favorable to their material preservation while considering them inanimate objects (Rubio, 2020). There is no question that the presence of insects carries with it a serious risk for the material integrity of the collections. Yet the destruction of every form of life through the use of powerful chemicals also threatens the life of the objects themselves. Implementing new norms makes it possible, however, to attenuate the kinds of harsh treatments that are imposed on the artifacts and deemed unfavorable from the point of view of their creators or those who retain legal rights over them.

Taken together, these examples show that the choices made in the storage reserves and conservation labs do have consequences for the life and death of the objects, literally. For half of the individuals questioned for the NMAI report, new practices made it possible in a concrete way to maintain the existence of the museum objects. Other choices, however, like the use of insecticides or anoxia, or the use of plastic for storing objects, ran the risk of asphyxiating the objects and hence killing them. By taking these concepts into consideration, museums can implement a certain number of measures meant to mitigate those risks. Generally, these are often balanced against the imperatives of conservation in Western museums, which is focused on preserving the materiality of collections. Thus, even if they result from a consultative approach, certain solutions that have been adopted at NMAI often involve choices that take into account costs and available space. The kind of mobile shelving used at the Suitland center, for instance, is fairly common and is notably employed at the Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, for instance. Nor is the use of freezers a singular choice. Thus, several of the decisions made by NMAI can also be explained by arguments other than those based solely on renewed attention to conservation practices, especially in light of economic and pragmatic issues. But recognizing that certain artifacts have specific needs enables one to implement specific treatments that can indeed limit the oppression that is exercised (often involuntarily) over collections.

Repairing objects, bodies, and stories

In his presentation at the 2019 *Ateliers de la pensée* in Dakar, the philosopher and economist Felwinn Sarr suggested that in European museums objects were neither dead nor alive but rather suspended perhaps in an in-between state.¹⁷ That is, they are waiting, as he sees it, for their restitution. Conserving cultural goods functions precisely in that gray area, where collections can be something else, can be transformed. Of course conservation should not be wielded as an argument to oppose restitution by implying that collections would be better preserved in Europe and North America (Étienne, 2021). Indeed,

conservation and more broadly the notion of “care” in museums should be envisioned critically, as Bonaventure Ndikung has stressed (Ndikung, 2020). Yet while the question of restitution is fundamental, it may not be the sole solution, notably in terms of the objects that are not subject to such a demand (and which represent the majority of the cases). In museums, conservation may lead to a series of actions that limit the wrongs already done and potentially effect repairs materially and symbolically, even if they are liable to compromise the stability (in the Western understanding of the term) of the object.

Most institutions do not address these issues with the same urgency as NMAI, but they can still favor practices that might make it possible to mitigate, however modestly, the pressure cultural artifacts are subject to. Such is the case of a gesture made by the poet and artist Kanak Denis Pourawa in the storage facilities (Dépôt et abri des biens culturels) of the Cantonal Museum of Archeology and History of Lausanne. The facilities are located in Lucens in a former nuclear power plant in the Canton of Vaud, Switzerland. The gesture was associated with the exhibition *Exotic? Regarder l'ailleurs en Suisse au siècle des Lumières*, which I curated with my team, Claire Brizon, Chonja Lee, and Etienne Wismer (the show was on view at the Palais de Rumine in Lausanne from September to December 2020). It was my colleague Claire Brizon who invited Pourawa to visit one of the featured objects, called Nââkwéta (Pourawa, 2020). Pourawa, in the context of the show, handled Nââkwéta without gloves. To the base of the object he attached a small fragment of the scarf he was wearing that day. For Pourawa, the gesture was about materializing the connection he had with the object, whose history had been passed on to him by word of mouth in his family (Brizon, forthcoming). Pourawa’s gesture was one of respect, even repair. He came to attest a living connection, as the poet saw it, between a human being and a nonhuman artifact, both originating in the same region.¹⁸

Simple discreet practices represent opportunities – although imperfect and however hesitant and incipient – to renew connections and repair broken or severed lines of cultural heritage. Nââkwéta was taken from its home, seized in the eighteenth century as part of the colonial exploration going on at the time, and is conserved today in Switzerland. Pourawa’s action is part of making visible a connection that historically was cut several centuries ago in the context of European territorial expansion in the Pacific. During the run of *Exotic?* Nââkwéta was displayed with the new addition. The artifact has since been returned to storage and the scrap of cloth has not been removed. The slight risk of damage implied by the addition of a contemporary product to an eighteenth century artifact was judged sufficiently minor vis-à-vis the benefit provided by a symbolically significant intervention.

Today politicians, artists, academics, and museum professionals are questioning the role played by conservation and, more broadly, repair in a postcolonial context. The term repair in English has of course a number of meanings. And the equivalent in French, *réparation*, is broader still, covering much of the same semantic ground as both “repair(s)” and “reparation(s).” Thus, *réparation* can denote the material repairs one makes to an object, the symbolic reparations – amends – offered after an offense, and the economic and political reparations that follow the resolution of a serious conflict. At the *Ateliers de la pensée* in Dakar in 2019, a panel called “Réparations, résilience et dévulnérabilisation” (Reparations, Resilience, and Devulnerabilization) brought together Karima Lazali, Kader Attia, Nafissatou Dia, and Christiane Taubira.¹⁹ The psychoanalyst Karima Lazali tackled reparations at a symbolic level, i.e. a necessary historical reversal for

undermining the duality of colonist and colonized, and pointing towards other ways of writing colonial history. She questioned the terminology and also proposed the term “restauration.” Christiane Taubira developed her reflection around the trafficking of enslaved people, stressing both the impossibility and extreme necessity of repairing (politically, economically, etc.) this crime against humanity. For Taubira, reparations have already occurred by and for African people and their descendants, the only ones genuinely able to be true actors in this story of reparations.

The artists Nafissatou Dia and Kader Attia suggested an approach that articulates even more directly material and symbolic reparations. Dia spoke of the technique of *kinstugi*, a Japanese method of repairing broken objects by emphasizing the break or fracture with gold powder covered with lacquer in order to point up the crack and heighten the value of the life of the object. She uses it as a metaphor for describing the survival and resilience of vulnerabilized people whose traumas can be integrated and transformed through art and creative expression. Kader Attia proposed comparing the scars on human bodies with the repairs made to African objects. For him, the strategy of erasing the wound is a Western obsession and an illusion. On the contrary, it is important to him, as it is to Dia, to see and recognize the flaw, which may be thought of as both significant and productive.

According to Attia, even today repairs carried out in a non-museum context are destabilizing for collectors and even museums:

“The unexpected aesthetics of these repairs, as it is seen from the Occidental ‘Modernist’ point of view or from today’s perspective, has always been the main reason for this ‘segregation.’ Why? Because they embody a sign that results from an act of a cultural otherness which tries to re-appropriate the space that was taken from it to create a new state that could be understood as a kind of resurrection.” (Attia, 2018, p. 30)

Non-museum repairs (for example, the gourds that are resewn or stapped, the raffia patched with European printed cotton fabric) mark the emergence of a singularity which, as the artist sees it, clashes and contrasts with the expectations of numerous actors in the museum milieu: “While a notion of repair in the Occident tries to ‘put things back in order,’ following the search for perfection that one finds in much Western thought, the repair in the non-Occidental world, on the contrary doesn’t return to the initial state, but gives a different form to the broken object, creating a new aesthetic vocabulary” (Attia, 2018, p. 30).

At least since Cesare Brandi, however, the theory of restoration recommends leaving traces of the material life of the object visible. This approach, which enjoins conservators to leave certain gaps or missing parts (*lacunae*) if they do not significantly hinder the legibility of the whole, is discussed on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, the different communities that are directly concerned occasionally demand the complete reintegration of missing parts on their objects – whether they have been lost simply over the course of time, through different usages, or from negligence on the part of their new owners. This is what occurred, for instance, with the reintegration of the parts missing from a length of Skaruhreh beaded cloth that is conserved at the NMAI; the conservator who was involved originally argued for minimal intervention on the artifact in keeping with her profession’s code of ethics (Heald, 1997, p. 35–39). Here the involvement of Native People transformed the way the object has been treated. They wanted to see the

object wholly re-embroidered using beads (even if the latter were produced closer to our time than those originally used), to guarantee both the coherence and beauty of the beaded cloth on display in the museum's galleries.

In the theoretical proposals formulated in Dakar, the notion of repair is understood in the broadest sense of the term, like a bridge spanning the material and the symbolic, the rational and the poetic. The way repairs and more generally the work of preventive conservation are carried out in the museum world can contribute to the struggle against the erasure of the history of objects and by extension the peoples in question. On the other hand, the wish to preserve at all costs the materials making up the artifact and to spare them from any and all deterioration can be viewed as perpetuating the "colonial pact" that Karima Lazali brings up, according to which coloniality (the systems of power that enabled colonialism and continue despite Independences) is both taboo and a force that even today is still at work in all the structures of societies. Coloniality is still expressed in the denial of the wound and the desire to control the material cultures that have been taken. To erase traces on objects is also a way of silencing the stories and the history they may bear, along with the singularities of the artists who have repaired them. While I contrasted in my introduction repairs through narratives (in the exhibition space) and repairs through gestures (in the storage rooms and restoration labs), it is possible then that the two forms are intrinsically connected. The breaks, fractures, cracks, and repairs are themselves mute narratives which conservation enables us to preserve, even to expand or extend, as in the case of Nââkwéta.

Conclusion: for a more comprehensive understanding of conservation

What this text modestly proposes then, and without offering any ready-made and easily applicable practical solution, would be to make conservation in the studios, labs, and reserves a practice that can contribute to repairing colonial trauma, or at the very least help to avoid perpetuating it. This would involve broadening and rethinking the concept of conservation, notably with respect to ecological and ethical imperatives. It is important then to return agency to the people involved in terms of conservation practices and collections management more broadly. This might mean keeping the trace of fractures and breaks, or reintegrating objects to look as they originally did, but above all it should involve accepting new museum practices that imply a loss of the power to decide; accepting, too, fragility, while eluding the illusion of mastery over both the material and time. As I have pointed out above, these transformations are underway in museums. They invite us to rethink in depth the concept of conservation. It is not only a matter of "sharing" Western scientific expertise with different institutions and inviting the source communities into the reserves of museums to restructure the usual ways of doing things in light of their knowledge. It also means redefining what is deemed to be preventative and active conservation itself by including a variety of practices, especially customs that may lead in the end to the loss of the material object. The accumulation of artifacts in storage facilities throughout Europe and North America, along with the enormous consumption of energy needed to maintain their material existence at all costs, no longer seems to be a realistic, even desirable ambition, as Domínguez Rubio lays out (2021). As I see it, the concepts of fragility, instability, and impermanence must continue to transform museums and the academic world, making them

places that are more in keeping with contemporary environmental realities and ethical concerns.

Notes

1. See the EU-based project connecting different ethnographic museums around the notion of care: <https://takingcareproject.eu/>
2. Yaëlle Biro and I speak of “rhapsodic objects,” asserting that the object itself both bears with it and conveys many stories. See *Rhapsodic Objects. Art, Agency, and Materiality (1700-2000)*, ed. Yaëlle Biro and Noémie Etienne (Boston and Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).
3. *The Way of the People*, volume 1, National Museum of the American Indian, Phase 1, Revised Draft Report, Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc., 4236, Main Street, Philadelphia, PA 19127, November 22, 1991.
4. *The Way of the People*, volume 2, Master Facilities Programing, Phase 2, Final Report, Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc., 4236, Main Street, Philadelphia, PA 19127, April 23, 1993.
5. *The Way of the People*, volume 3, A Detailed Architectural Program, Museum of the National Mall, Washington D.C., Master Facilities Programing, Phase 2, Final Report, Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc., 4236, Main Street, Philadelphia, PA 19127, September 15, 1993.
6. *The Way of the People*, appendix, Washington D.C., Master Facilities Programing, Phase 2, Final Report, Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc., 4236, Main Street, Philadelphia, PA 19127, September 15, 1993.
7. *The Way of the People*, vol. 2, Wendy Jessup Report, “Native American Tribal Museum and Center Survey on Storage, Care and Access,” James D. Nason, May 25, 1992, 42-55.
8. Clémentine Delisse speaks about the “hygienist temptation” (la tentation hygiéniste) in “Formes rapides de restitution,” *Multitudes*, 2020, 1 no. 78, 186. In the same volume, see also Nanette Snoep, “De la ConServation à la ConVersation. Le pari de la carte blanche,” *ibid.*, 198-202. On the connections between biopolitics, fascism, and the rhetoric of purification through destruction, see also for instance Ruth Ben-Ghiat, e.g., <https://lucid.substack.com/p/fascist-biopolitics-empty-cribs-and>, consulted September 28, 2021.
9. Sylvena Mayer, “NMAI – Collection Housing, Care, and Access Survey,” in *Native American Tribal Museum and Center Survey on Storage, Care and Access*, Phase 2, May 25, 1992, without date for the interview nor page number.
10. “Each room will be isolated to limit damage in the event of fire, pest infestation, or mechanical failure. In addition, the fire and smoke alarm systems of each room will be separately controlled to allow for the monitored use of smoke and smudging in ceremonial uses. Open fires will not be permitted to burn within the collection housing areas, and the amount of smoke produced by smudging and other ceremonies will be minimal and controllable. Alarm systems will be isolated and a ‘Fire watch’ established by the Office Protection Services to remotely monitor the smoke produced by a ceremony ... Artifacts may also be moved to the Ceremonial Room (with a separate air exhaust system) and outdoor Courtyard area located off the Resource Center for ritual and private use.” National Museum of the American Indian, Master Facilities Program, Suitland, Vol. 2, April 23, 1993, VI. 230.
11. Anna Silas, “NMAI – Collection Housing, Care, and Access Survey,” *Native American Tribal Museum and Center Survey on Storage, Care and Access*, Phase 2, May 25, 1992, without precise date for the interview nor page number.
12. Edmund J. Ladd, Zuni, in National Museum of the American Indian, Master Facilities Program: Suitland, Volume 2, April 23, 1993 VII. 442.
13. For additional details see <https://museumpests.net/solutions-case-studies/solutions-low-temperature-treatments-at-the-national-museum-of-the-american-indian/>, Accessed September 1, 2021.
14. Betty Cornelius, “NMAI – Collection Housing, Care, and Access Survey,” *Native American Tribal Museum and Center Survey on Storage, Care and Access*, Phase 2, May 25, 1992, without precise date for the interview nor page number.

15. "Zuni masks must be fed once or twice per year by their people, male and female, to let the museum's staff do this would be to neglect our responsibility and would not do any good," Edmund J. Ladd, in National Museum of the American Indian, Master Facilities Program: Suitland, Volume 2, April 23, 1993 VII. 442.
16. "And storage of the masks is a very important consideration not only from Zuni but from Hopi. I know that we have Hopi masks, the helmet masks that are decorated and kept on the shelf. And they should never be hung on a string or stored in a dark place. They should be on an open shelf where they can breathe ... The helmet mask should be upright. And they can be up high. They can be up above our level. But the flat mask, the half mask, and the full-faced mask should be about eye level and lower. And really, they should never have plastic around them or over them." Edmund J. Ladd, Zuni, National Museum of the American Indian, Master Facilities Program: Suitland Volume 2, April 23, 1993 VII. 443.
17. The talks are available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8FlaBiASbc> The panel in question begins at 1'24".
18. Email correspondence between the author and Denis Pourawa, June 4, 2021.
19. The day's talks are available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8FlaBiASbc> The panel in question begins at 3'01". I would like to thank Lotte Arndt for pointing out this reference to me. The present paragraph is based on these presentations.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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