I first came across St. Louis’ nickname—and the mounds that are scattered about the region—when I was preparing to move to St. Louis. The many trips I took to Cahokia Mounds allowed me to create a link between my new home and the research I had been conducting in Phoenix into “desert aesthetics” and global contemporary indigenous artistic practice. As such, this show is truly the culmination of research I have been interested in for over five years, and I am glad to see it come to fruition.

Mound City coincides with the 250th anniversary of the modern founding of St. Louis. Just as STL250 provides an umbrella for community-wide birthday celebrations of the white settler presence in the region, Mound City celebrates the community-wide presence of the ancient Native culture scattered across our landscape. The coincidence allows our ongoing use of St. Louis as a research platform for the creation of truly inspiring art.
Joe, Robin and colleagues Yvette Luedde and Mary Jo Anderson, Master Gardeners, for helping us plant species that would have been eaten by our local residents 1,000 years ago. We would also like to thank the following for their time and expertise in building Geoffrey Krawzyck’s work Recess: Cement Masons Local 527, Ironworkers local 396, Bricklayer’s Local #1, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 513 and Carpenters District Council of Greater St. Louis & Vicinity.

Thanks to the following colleagues for making available cultural material for our Loans That Don’t Move program: Amy Clark at the St. Louis Art Museum for allowing us to “borrow” works in their Mississippian culture collection, including their chunkey—the game piece so key in understanding that the Mississippian culture was, indeed, of our place and not simply an import from the south. Staff Amie Bossi and Nancy Ylvisaker at Bellefontaine Cemetery have allowed us to “borrow” their mounds—unexplored constructions appropriately situated at the site where modern St. Louisans have buried their own notables. We also thank Brooke Mahar, of the Mastodon State Historic site, and Amanda Claunch, from the Missouri History Museum, for making available works and expertise for this project.

Finally we thank Eric Thoelke of TOKY Branding + Design, for his conversation on this topic of mutual interest and for the beautiful, experimental design they have created to express the complex ideas in the show. Also, to James Harrison, director of Webster University’s Film Series for his curatorial collaboration in curating the Mound City film series.

Thanks go to Laumeier’s staff that make our programs possible: Dana Turkovic, Curator of Exhibitions, Nick Lang, Chief Preparator, Liz Murphy, Registrar and Eric Nauman, Assistant Preparator; Jackie Chambers, Development Officer, Marie Oberkirsch, Special Events Manager and Jennie Swanson, Membership and Museum Services Manager; and Don Gerling, Operations Supervisor, and his staff Mike Clermont, Wes Nance and Yvette Luedde, all of St. Louis County Parks.

My thanks also go to Julia Norton, Administrative and Volunteer Coordinator; Suzanne Sierra, Interim Public Relations Officer; Joy Wright, Librarian; Karen Mullen, Curator of Education, and Clara Collins Coleman, Curator of Interpretation, for the roles they take in creating the unique environment at Laumeier.

As always, I am grateful to our Board and volunteers, St. Louis County Parks, the Regional Arts Commission, the Missouri Arts Council, the Arts and Education Council of St. Louis, the University of Missouri-St. Louis and the Mark Twain Laumeier Endowment Fund for ongoing support of our mission. Board member Mary Ann Srenco and Andy Srenco have generously underwritten our publication.

MARILU KNODE  
Executive Director / Chief Curator
SAM DURANT
FREE HANGING CHAIN, 2014
CHAIN LINK
DIMENSIONS VARIABLE
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PPaula Cooper Gallery, New York

JOE HARL AND ROBIN MACIRAN
MISSISSIPPIAN DWELLING, 2014
MUD, WOOD
DIMENSIONS VARIABLE
COURTESY THE ARTISTS, ST. LOUIS
**GEOFFREY KRAWCZYK**

Recess, 2014
red brick, dirt
dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist, New York

**BEVERLY PEPPER**

Cromlech Glen, 1985–90
earth, sod, sandstone, trees
212 x 1120 x 2288 inches (2/5 of an acre)
Laumeier Sculpture Park Commission
with funds from Anonymous Donors
ALISON SAAR
Leiliana, 1997
painted wood, copper, steel wire
67 x 15 1/2 x 20 inches
Laumeier Sculpture Park Commission with funds from the Mark Twain Laumeier Endowment Fund

MARIE WATT
Study for Earthmover, 2014
11 x 10.5 inches
Reclaimed wool and embroidery floss
Courtesy the artist, Portland
KiM YASUDA
Hunt + Gather, 2012–2014
plants, vegetables
dimensions variable
Laumeier Sculpture Park Commission
with funds from The Mark Twain
Laumeier Endowment Fund

A TRIBE CALLED RED
Loans that don’t move

**ARTIST UNKNOWN**

Discoidal (Mississippian), (c. 1000–1400)

stone

5 3/8 inches diameter

Collection of Saint Louis Art Museum
ARTIST UNKNOWN
Clovis Type Projectile Points, (c. 11,500 B.C.E.)
RCYBP, radio carbon years before present
dimensions variable
Courtesy of Mastodon State Historic Site,
Kimmswick, Missouri

ARTIST UNKNOWN
Monk's Mound, (c. 1000-1400)
earth
11,456.4 x 9,291.6 inches
Courtesy of Cahokia Mounds
State Historic Site,
Collinsville, Illinois
Piasa Blvd, date unknown
paint on bluff rocks
dimensions variable
Alton, Illinois

Protest of the Sioux, 1904
5 x 7 inches
digital print
Collection of the Missouri History Museum, St. Louis
ARTIST UNKNOWN

Chunkey Player Figurine, date unknown
clay
8 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches
Collection of the Cahokia Mounds Site Interpretive Center, Collinsville, Illinois

CHARLES BRENNAN

Chief Pontiac Plaque, (c. 1769)
bronze
11 x 17 inches
St. Louis, Missouri
A TRIBE CALLED RED
DJ crew A Tribe Called Red (ATCR) produces a truly unique sound that’s impacting the global electronic scene and urban club culture. Since 2010 the group—made up of two-time Canadian DMC Champion Ian “DJ NDN” Campeau, Dan “DJ Shub” General and DJ Bear Witness—has been mixing traditional pow wow vocals and drumming with cutting-edge electronic music. Their self-titled album was long-listed for Canada’s prestigious Polaris Music Prize and included in the Washington Post’s top 10 albums of the year. ATCR’s music is the soundtrack to a contemporary renaissance for pow wows: their Electric Pow Wow events in Ottawa showcase Native talent and aboriginal culture, alongside an open, wild party. They’ve become the face of an urban Native youth Renaissance, championing their heritage and speaking out on aboriginal issues, while being on top of pop culture. DJ Bear Witness doubles as the crew’s visual artist and creates political and sometimes controversial videos that incorporate 1920’s silent film and pop culture references to Native people and reclaim the aboriginal image.

JOE HARL
Joe Harl is Vice President of the Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis and has served as principal investigator of master plans for the management of archaeological resources within St. Louis City and County as well as St. Charles County, Missouri. He obtained an M.A. in Anthropology from Washington University in St. Louis and a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Harl has been actively excavating local and regional histories in the Southwest Ceremonial Complex for over thirty years. His work investigates relationships between contemporary living conditions and important historical figures and events. Through collaborative site surveys and educational programs, Harl endeavors to promote a community’s place within local, state and national historical landscapes and to increase awareness of shared histories. His archaeological research centers on the developments of Late Woodland and Mississippian lifestyles and cultural practices in present-day Missouri, Illinois, Kansas and Tennessee.

GEORGE KRACZYK
Geoffrey Krawczyk’s performances, drawings and paintings explore the mythology of spirituality, the politics of aesthetics and connections between the sacred and the profane. Krawczyk uses ritual as both metaphor and maternal, at times incorporating the acts of cooking and eating to promote dialogue between disparate groups, methods and events. His practice centers on reinterpreting notions of collective experience. Born in Oklahoma City in 1978, he received his B.F.A. in Painting and Printmaking from the University of Oklahoma in 2006 and his M.F.A. in Visual Studies from SUNY-Buffalo in 2010. He currently lives and works in New York. He has exhibited nationally and internationally with past exhibitions and performances at Vault Gallery, Buffalo; AKRA Gallery, Oklahoma City; The Box, New York City; and Hardesty Art Center, Tulsa and at the Hotel Nuit Blanche, Toronto. His work is represented in private collections in Forosheca, Mexico; Berlin; London; Atlanta and Missoula, MT.

ROBIN MACHIRAN
Robin MacFarlan is a St. Louis-based anthropologist, art historian and educator who specializes in Mississippian cultures and indigenous artisans. His expertise and collection of the American Bottom region of North America. MacFarlan holds a B.A. in Anthropology and an M.A. in History with a Museum Studies from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. As a founding member of the Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis, MacFarlan conducts field investigations, prehistoric and historical archival research, artifact analyses and architectural surveys of past and present landscapes to help communities better understand the natural and built environments which they shape and with which they interact. In 2003 MacFarlan was awarded an Illinois Association for the Advancement of Archaeology grant to conduct field work with volunteers and community groups in East St. Louis and Cahokia. Projects include Cahokia Mound 34, Cahokia West Palisade, Sugarloaf Mound, East St. Louis Mound Group and the Shilo Park Project.

BEVERLY PEPPER
Born in Brooklyn in 1923, Beverly Pepper began her career as an artist in an ad agency. She studied art and industrial design at Pratt Institute. Her work was known for its use of raw steel sculptures in hollow, geometric shapes in which she utilizes box-like forms, and paints inner surfaces in a single, bright color. Pepper has built an international reputation with her work from indigenous design principles, oral tradition, personal experience and Western art history. Her approach to art-making is shaped by the proto-feminism of Iroquois women as well as the anti-feminism of Inoqua’s matrilineal custom, political work by Native artists in the 60’s, a discourse on multiculturalism, Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art. She has exhibited at the Denver Art Museum, Denver; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Museum of Art and Design, New York; and Hallie Ford Museum, Salem, OR. Pepper’s work has earned numerous awards including the 2009 Bonnie Bronson Fellowship Award, the 2007 Anonymous Was A Woman Award, and the 2006 Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellowship. Her work has been collected by the Hallie Ford Museum, the Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, The Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian; and the Seattle Art Museum.

ALISON SAAR
Alison Saar was born in Los Angeles in 1966. She earned her B.A. from Scripps College, Claremont California in 1987 and her M.F.A. from Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles in 1981. She has received grants and awards from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in 1989 and the National Endowment for the Arts. Her work has been exhibited at: the University of California Los Angeles’ Fowler Museum of Cultural History; Los Angeles Louver Gallery; Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York City; and the Pasadena Museum of Art, California. Saar’s work is represented in collections including: the Baltimore Art Museum; the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art.

MARIE WATT
Multidisciplinary artist Marie Watt, born in 1967, is of Seneca, German and Scottish ancestry. Watt received her B.S. in Anthropology from Arizona State University and her M.F.A. in Visual Arts and Art at Williams University, Salem, Oregon and her M.F.A. in Painting and Printmaking from Yale University in 1996. Formerly, her work draws from indigenous design principles, oral tradition, personal experience and Western art history. Her approach to art-making is shaped by the proto-feminism of Inoqua’s matrilineal custom, political work by Native artists in the 60’s, a discourse on multiculturalism, Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art. She has exhibited at the Denver Art Museum, Denver; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Museum of Art and Design, New York; and Hallie Ford Museum, Salem, OR. Watt’s work has earned numerous awards including the 2009 Bonnie Bronson Fellowship Award, the 2007 Anonymous Was A Woman Award, and the 2006 Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellowship. Her work has been collected by the Hallie Ford Museum, the Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, The Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian; and the Seattle Art Museum.

KIM YASUDA
Kim Yasuda was raised in California and earned her B.F.A. in 1983 from San Jose State University, California and her M.F.A. in 1988 from the University of Southern California—Los Angeles. She is currently a professor of spatial studies in the Art Department at the University of California—Santa Barbara and the codirector of the University California Institute for Research in the Arts. Yasuda has exhibited at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; the Smithsonian, Washington; the Oakland Museum of Art, California; the Anne Adkins Center for Photography, San Francisco; the Nexus Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta; and Cameron Art Gallery, London. Yasuda has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Joan Mitchell Foundation.

SAM DURANT
Sam Durant’s work engages a variety of social and spiritual issues, often using American history to explore fraught relationships between culture, politics and official memory. Durant was born in Seattle in 1954 and grew up in San Francisco in the 1960’s. He received his B.F.A. and M.F.A. from Massachusetts College of Art, Boston and his M.A. from the California Institute of the Arts. He has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf; S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium; and the Guggenheim Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Tate Modern, London; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. He has received awards and grants from the Smithsonian Institution, Washington; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York; and the USA Foundation, New York.

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Multidisciplinary artist Marie Watt, born in 1967, is of Seneca, German and Scottish ancestry. Watt received her B.S. in Anthropology from Arizona State University and her M.F.A. in painting and printmaking from Yale University in 1996. Formerly, her work draws from indigenous design principles, oral tradition, personal experience and Western art history. Her approach to art-making is shaped by the proto-feminism of Inoqua’s matrilineal custom, political work by Native artists in the 60’s, a discourse on multiculturalism, Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art. She has exhibited at the Denver Art Museum, Denver; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Museum of Art and Design, New York; and Hallie Ford Museum, Salem, OR. Watt’s work has earned numerous awards including the 2009 Bonnie Bronson Fellowship Award, the 2007 Anonymous Was A Woman Award, and the 2006 Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellowship. Her work has been collected by the Hallie Ford Museum, the Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, The Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian; and the Seattle Art Museum.
“IF A PIECE OF HISTORY OF A PEOPLE DOESN’T GET RESOLVED... THEN IT IS THE PRESENT, IT’S ALWAYS PRESENT.”

JIMMIE DURHAM
LANDSCAPE IS THE VICTIM OF HISTORY
MOUND CITY EXPLORES THE REMNANTS OF THE “SUCCESSION CULTURES” THAT EXIST IN THE ST. LOUIS REGION, AND THE STUBBORN STAIN THAT HUMAN COLONY COLLAPSE HAS LEFT ON OUR LANDSCAPE. ‘THE VISIBLE TRACES OF CULTURAL “SPATIAL OVERWRITING” ARE EVERYWHERE.’

Beginning with the ancient Native American mounds scattered across the Midwest to elegant French colonial homes reminiscent of our feeder culture in New Orleans, from the brick piles in the 18th and 19th century German and Italian neighborhoods to the dismantled, red-lined African American neighborhoods on the Northside, St. Louis is a virtual diorama of the successive waves of colonizers and immigrants who sought to shape our natures cultural landscape. These jumbled-together structures, and their distinct formal shapes and complex uses, make St. Louis one of the richest depositories of man-made sculptural places in the United States. From our ancient past to our present history through our past. Through artist commissions, works in Laumeier’s Collection and the next iteration of Laumeier’s Loans That Don’t Move program, we continue our focus on an “archaeology of place” that uses the rich resources of our community to think anew about art’s role in considering our visual landscape.

The nickname “Mound City” refers to the ancient man-made mounds that were part of the complex culture created by the Mississippian peoples at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers 1,000 years ago, and whose epicenter is celebrated at the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site and Museum in Collinsville, IL, just across the Mississippi River from downtown St. Louis. While late 19th century Americans declared Native Americans the disappeared race, neither they, nor their contributions to our contemporary world, are invisible. The continued presence of Native culture is found not just through archaeological digs, but through the works of contemporary artists who seek to reconcile the conflicts of our past as they manifest themselves in our present.

Marie Watt, who is of Native American ancestry, has created works that acknowledge a collective heritage through community sewing activities that result in new forms of totems or memorials. Her blanket totems recall both the cooperation and the blankets brought by white settlers that inadvertently spread diseases for which the Native peoples had no protection. For Mound City, Watt creates work that uses modern methods and materials to mirror the building processes of the mound peoples. She looks particularly at the contrast between how the Mound Builders’ hand-formed mounds re-shaped the landscape one basketful at a time, while in our contemporary world we use heavy machinery to re-form the contours created by nature in a heartbeat. Watt uses non-traditional forms of art making—sewing circles and over-sized sculptures in non-traditional materials—to stitch together new forms of community.

Geoffrey Krawczyk stages performative events that explore the on-going interpretation of Native and non-Native cultures in America. For Mound City, Krawczyk combines formal elements of two of the “succession cultures” in our region—the Mississippian peoples and the robust African American communities that continue to be pulled apart in North St. Louis—to suggest how our past is now present. Krawczyk has created his own hybrid home that uses the red clay bricks that typify the 19th century emigrant enclaves of North and South St. Louis to create a modern mound that has collapsed on Laumeier’s grounds. Krawczyk suggests, through this work, that neither the history of our relationship to Native American culture, nor our relationship to African American history, has been resolved, and we continue to create edifices of decay as a result. Krawczyk seeks to confound the archaeological record of suburban St. Louis, whose mere existence is predicated upon an abandoned city core at the heart of our current social malaise.

Sam Durant has taken as his touchstone the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, a.k.a. the Gateway Arch, to trigger his work at Laumeier. The Arch has come to embody certain myths about the founding of America. Some historians tell us that North America was an empty continent which gave de facto “permission” to waves of colonizers to seize the lands. In fact, the continent was covered with complex societies with the same political goals, social conflicts and hierarchies as the incoming immigrants. The Arch celebrates St. Louis’ historical role as the western-most outpost in conquering the land and peoples west of the Mississippi, yet not all pioneers were the successful entrepreneurs we imagine. In her book The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West, historian Patty Limerick belies the myths of pioneer individualism and self-made man. She articulates how the East’s wealthy few enticed Europe’s many poor to do the dirty work of taking the country, dirt clod by dirt clod, one Indian massacre at a time. The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West, historian Patty Limerick belies the myths of pioneer individualism and self-made man. She articulates how the East’s wealthy few enticed Europe’s many poor to do the dirty work of taking the country, dirt clod by dirt clod, one Indian massacre at a time.
While the Arch seeks to proclaim St. Louis’ important role in the conquest of the continent, we must consider that, by 1963, when the Arch was built, St. Louis had seen a significant decline. St. Louis was the fourth largest city in the nation in 1904, the year of the World’s Fair in St. Louis and the 100th anniversary of the return of Lewis & Clark. Today, St. Louis is the 24th largest city in the country, a fact bemoaned by residents who wish for the glory days of our city. The Arch is as much an inadvertent memorial to the loss of the region’s financial, social, political and economic primacy in the American body politic as it is a mourning for the lost cultures that were swept away in our rush to gobble up land. Durant’s public work uses the same minimalist vocabulary and materials as Saarinen but with dramatically opposite implications. His mock memorials celebrate the many colorful stories that are left out of the singular narrative about the founding of our place.

As part of our on-going recontextualization of works in Laumeier’s Permanent Collection, we find a thread linking six legacy and recent works to the themes and concerns of Mound City.

The work that suggests the most personal connection between an artist’s practice and Mound City’s goal to find traces of Native culture in our contemporary society is Alison Saar’s work Leelinau, 1997. Saar’s work refers to a Native American myth about a maiden who runs into the woods with the tree fairies, to dwell in the contemplative solitude of the woods rather than be sold into an arranged marriage. With her own mixed heritage (Native American, African American and European American), Saar borrows an ancient tale of escape and self-determination to create a figurative sculpture that will, with time, melt back into the nature that created it. Saar’s practice acknowledges the temporary life of her work, a trait unique to the generation of artists working since the 1960s.

As a student of native peoples and cultures, Rosalyn Deutscher is particularly interested in the themes and concerns of Mound City. The project is an example of how powerful the myths of the Pilgrim Story are….their pictorial guide, shows an awareness of the ideological basis through which they present history. It reveals an understanding of the catastrophic consequences of this history for Native Americans… Unfortunately they do not acknowledge that this situation harms not only history’s victims but its victors as well…. They understand, and rightly so, that both the myths and the realities (of genocide) are at the very center of American (U.S.) identity.21

Durant’s original idea for Mound City was to continue his research on the monuments to the myths of America’s founding—the Gateway Arch—to reflect on the impact built monuments have on our understanding of history. Durant strung five colored metal catenary arches (like those used by architect Eero Saarinen in the Arch), upside down on the Whitaker Woods Trail. These works are flexible, not fixed, embedded inside the disturbed landscape of Laumeier.20

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for the rise and fall of her work to mirror that of any human culture.16

In her work Laumeier Project, 1981, Jackie Ferrara draws from ancient building forms, such as Mayan temples, to create her first open step temple. Ferrara’s use of wood, a natural material, also recognizes that all human constructions can, and will, disappear back into the ground from whence they came. Richard Fleischner’s five-part work St. Louis Project, 1989, uses stone, another natural ancient building material, and looks like ancient building fragments left in the landscape. Fleischner scattered his work so that it “jumps” Laumeier’s landscape, to create her first open step temple, allowing for the ancient associations of his work to be interrupted, and animated, by our modern car culture. Alexander Liberman’s work The Way, 1980, made of old telephone poles to outline not an observatory, but a block from the notorious Pruitt-Igoe. Pruitt-Igoe housed thousands of African American community. Not even modern developers have rushed to the site for redevelopment, cursed, perhaps, as it is by the ghost of failed mid-century social engineering. When installed, Chávez’s own Woodhenge looked like trees stripped bare of their foliage and left abandoned in the landscape. At the end of the show, the henge was shored off where it lives, like a ghost, in Laumeier’s grounds, in honor of how the landscape continues to hold history’s conflicts for future discovery.

These six works have all considered the impact of human resource extraction and social conflict in shaping the monuments that litter our landscape. In many ways, it is sculpture’s ability to physically engage the world that allows these artists to critically comment on the world around them.

Mound City is, ultimately, about the “succession cultures” embedded in the “succession landscapes” of our place. Our town’s French colonial name, Saint Louis, supplants, but does not erase, the Native city that gives our region the nickname “Mound City.” In fact, the Americans who settled the area have mispronounced the French so profoundly that they, too, have virtually erased our multi-cultural heritage.

We can divine the conflicts in our rich geographical area through the monuments we have created and abandoned. The conflicts that continue to haunt American cultural life—the destruction of lives and cultures at the founding of our democracy, and the subsequent slave labor used to firmly re-shape the landscape—are marked by the mounds and the soaring metal brace of the Gateway Arch.
MOUNDS OF ST. LOUIS AND THE MISSISSIPPIAN CULTURE

A.C.E. 900 – 1400
WHEN FRENCH COLONIAL SETTLERS FIRST ARRIVED, THEY FOUND A NUMBER OF EARTHEN MOUNDS SCATTERED ACROSS THE REGION, WITH A CLUSTER OF 25 MOUNDS LOCATED JUST NORTH OF THEIR NEWLY ESTABLISHED VILLAGE OF ST. LOUIS.

Over the years, these magnificent earthworks fascinated American settlers, predominate of European heritage, since they were obviously constructed by people with knowledge of mathematics and engineering. Many refused to accept that the ancestors of the Native Americans were capable of constructing these wonders. Believing, instead, the mounds were built by an ancient race of people identified as the “Mound Builders” who most assumed were of Old World origins. The most likely candidates consisted of the Last Tribe of Israel, Hindus, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, the Welsh or even refugees from the mythical land of Atlantis. It was thought that the “savage” Native Americans had destroyed this once magnificent race and their civilization. These ideas were based on the fears and prejudice of European American settlers who simply ignored the fact that Spanish and French explorers recorded Native people have constructed earthen mounds for nearly 4000 years. These were used to mark important places and as burials of important leaders. The 25 mounds that once existed just north of the Gateway Arch were built around 1000 years ago by a group of people referred to by archaeologists as the “Mississippians.” Their actual name and which tribes these groups became have been lost over time. Archaeologists use the present name for this group due to their major settlements being placed along the Mississippi River or its tributaries.

Mississippian in the St. Louis area developed a diversity of settlements. Large, multi-mound centers, like the ones that existed in St. Louis and Cahokia Mounds, served as civic/ceremonial centers. These centers had various mounds, with conical mounds used for the remains of the elite, ridge shaped mounds used for burials as well as to mark important places and platform mounds used to hold homes of the elite, temples, charnel houses and other important buildings. The centers amassed great wealth and had large markets where goods from across the country were exchanged. Among the precious items were copper from the Great Lakes, mica from the Appalachian Mountains of South Carolina, marine shells and whelk shells from the Gulf of Mexico and obsidian from Yellowstone National Park. Smaller communities also served to redistribute these goods. These communities had at least one platform mound and one burial mound, as well as a smaller market place. Most people of the time, however, resided within small farming hamlets with widely spaced homes or within isolated farmsteads. A burial ground was usually associated with these places, with their bodies placed into graves lined with large limestone slabs.

Similar to the economic system of America during the 1700s and 1800s, most Mississippian were farmers who raised crops to support the growing number of craft people, artisans, priests and ruling elite. Corn was one of the crops raised. Corn and tobacco was first introduced into this region from Central America about 2000 years ago. Despite common belief, corn was not immediately accepted. It only was widely raised about 1300 years ago. There were other crops that were more important. These consist of plants considered weeds today: lamb’squarter (or goosefoot), knotweed, maygrass and little barley. This group of plants produces a starchy seed similar to corn but is native to the area. They are the first plants to grow in any disturbed field. Native Americans altered the seeds so that they were larger and had a thinner seed coat for higher yields and easier processing. These plants are actually healthier than corn. People are beginning to recognize this fact today: for example, goosefoot is now sold in health food stores or commercially marketed as Quinoa. Other popular cultigens consisted of manihot and sunflowers, which produce an oily seed, and a variety of squashes and gourds. Tobacco was raised since it was first introduced and may have been mixed with nightshade to increase its narcotic effect. A number of other plants were used for foods and medicines that we only now are beginning to appreciate.

Missouri has a wealth of natural resources that once fueled the Mississippian economy. Resources exploited include Burlington and other cherts for making sharp tools, hematite (softest form of iron) used to produce a red pigment, galena (lead ore) for decoration, igneous stones used to produce celts, salt used to preserve foods and fire clays used to produce figurines. Mississippian communities were established nearby to exploit and trade these resources.

Mississippian culture, especially in Missouri, is still poorly understood. Hopefully more of these sites will be studied in the future, allowing future generations to appreciate these people, making these places a source of community pride, and perhaps, use foods, medicines or ideas developed by these remarkable people to improve our lives today.

JOE HARL AND ROBIN MACHIRAN
Senior Cultural Resource Specialists, Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis; Laumeier Sculpture Park In Residence Archaeologists, 2014
Archaeologists have tantalizing clues about the Valley; it even invented a sport called Chunkey. What is so special about Cahokia and associated sites that it also remains a best-kept secret. Cahokia remains “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma,” so much so, that it also remains a best-kept secret.

Contemporary artists who encounter Cahokia for the first time are often surprised by the existence of such a feature near the otherwise stereotypical and conventionally American, metropolitan St. Louis. Seeing Monk’s Mound is like stumbling across Stonehenge or Giza without the expectant fanfare generated by tourism and the exotic locale. This understated UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization) World Heritage Site has therefore become a rich vein of source material for contemporary art. Mound City invites you to look at the art of A Tribe Called Red. Sam Durant, Geoffrey Knuczycz, Marie Watt and our own In Residence archaeologists Joe Hari and Robbin Macharion and untangle some of the mystery and to look for those traces of native culture in our contemporary world.

Block rocking beats blend traditional powwow vocals and drumming with cutting-edge electronic bass when Ottawa-based DJ trio A Tribe Called Red kick off the exhibition with an opening reception performance in the Park. The crew is made up of Dan “DJ Shub” General, Ian “DJ JN” Campou and Bear Witness. Their music, described as “powwow step” incorporates both sound and imagery from their First Nation identity (Upper/Lower Cayuga and Nipissing Anishnabe) into their music and performances. The drums are distinctive but their creative force also appeals to contemporary mainstream listeners. Their name, A Tribe Called Red, was made up to appeal to both Natives on the Reservation and to urban Aboriginals where “A Tribe Called...” has been used by different drum groups and Nations on letterman jackets. In addition, the A Tribe Called Quest reference is recognizable to the First Nations living in urban areas. Now faithfully recognized as part of the Native urban youth renaissance, A Tribe Called Red champions their heritage through music and video art that is both political and humorous, with clever layering from film and pop culture from their Native people to reclaim the aboriginal image. Their interactive performance marks our continued interest in representing a range of art forms in the Park that create a tangible, real environment that challenges traditional definitions of sculpture cast in bronze or welded in steel.

Sam Durant’s Free Hanging Chain, 2014, continues his culture of critique by inverting the shape of the St. Louis Gateway Arch. The arch design uses a catenary curve which is based on the arc made by a free hanging chain when held at both ends by a pair of hands. By deconstructing the three words used to title the work, Durant not only picks apart the definition of a geometric shape but also an entire set of assumptions about manifest destiny and the terrible legacy of slavery after launched from St. Louis westward into the Rocky Mountains. A group of nickel-plated chains hang between tree branches along the trail near the northeast entry into the Whitaker Woods Trail. The work functions in several interconnected ways; it embodies the “official” description of the Arch as a “free hanging chain,” and when inverted, develops rich historical associations. The words “free,” “hanging” and “chain” must seem to hold meanings that contrast with the message of the Arch itself; indeed they would appear to contradict each other. Each word smashes the meaning of the previous word in the definition. Who or what is “free”? Who or what things are clasped in “chains”? (Dred Scott’s doomsa is ironically enough on display under the Arch in the Museum of Westward Expansion.)4 The notion of “hanging” introduces a sense of physical attachment a tetherng, but it also has the association with capital punishment and lynching. The sound of rattling “chains” reinforces an idea of unbreakable links accumulated either through love or via cruel bondage. Like Jacob Marley in Charles Dickens’ Christmas Carol or the slave gangs in Quentin Tarantino’s 2013 film Django Unchained, the “chain” itself becomes a return of something repressed or hidden and accumulation of shame and sin, surely a close antonym of the word “free.”

It may be that the Arch holds these contradictory meanings in a latent form and Durant brings them forward in a reading that borrows from Bacliff and Staatman as much as Marx and Garvey. Since it is fairly well understood that the Arch and Museum of Westward Expansion celebrate the United States of America’s hegemony in North America, the edifice itself functions implicitly as a triumphal arch, similar to Napoleonic’s Arc de Triomphe in Paris (which lists the military victories of the French Revolutionary and Imperial Army), or the Arch of Constantine in Rome (which depicts Roman troops sacking Jerusalem carrying off the Menorah). The Arch is an architectural expression for the winners of history, but what of the losers or the bit part players or those obliterated by history? A local statue that recognized the victims of westward expansion, Protest of the Sioux, 1904, by Cyrus Dallin, made for the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis as part of an exhibit for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, is an equine statue of a Native on horseback, raising his hand as if to say “enough!” The statue, made from Plaster of Paris, crumbled into dust within a year, proving as fragile as Durant’s chain is unbreakable.
St. Louis is a city that is defined by tumbledown and broken housing stock. Geoffrey Krawczyk’s site-specific installation Recess, 2014, is an interactive space that refers to the decline of the Cahokian culture and the contemporary decay of urban areas of St. Louis. Recess is nestled into a natural dirt dropoff that supports a room-sized chamber made from a mixture of new and donated reclaimed red brick from architectural ruins in St. Louis’ North Side and built with donated labor from the St. Louis Bricklayers Union. The “new ruin”, sited in the woods adjacent to the Children’s Sculpture Garden, suggests neglect, economic collapse, soil erosion, ghettoization and gentrification. In the year leading up to Mound City, solicitations were made to organizations and individuals in the community about their ideas of the challenges facing St. Louis via a web interface designed by Krawczyk. These reflections have been engraved into a number of the bricks holding up Recess. The remnants of modern economic and social policy echo the decay of Cahokia 750 years ago. Cahokia was abandoned and the best guesses as to why echo contemporary ecological catastrophe theories such as depletion of resources and climate change. Perhaps it was just a failure to progress a literate stage, as Cahokia has no comparable written language and how the lack of literacy at least provides a continuous conversation about ways to revitalize areas wounded and bloodied by decline.

The aches and pains of construction site labor are highlighted by Marie Watt’s contribution to the exhibition. It is believed that the Cahokians hauled a backbreaking 50-60 pounds of earth at a time from borrow pits and carried them to mound sites. The sculpture Earthmover, 2014, commemorates the tools they used to create the great mounds at Cahokia. A partially buried, recycled 12-foot mega-mining vehicle weighing 5,000 pounds creates a monumental rubber archway which contrasts with a stool, an inverted bronze cast of a burden basket, used by the laborers at Cahokia, designed as a resting spot. Historically, burden baskets were made of split oak or cane and were shaped to conform to the back of the bearer and a strap was attached that looped from the bottom of the basket around the person’s forehead to help support the heavy load. The two sculptural elements that make up Earthmover, do double duty as commentary on the physical but also the psychological marks left over time or through conventional modern industrial farming.

Another sort of work, this time from multiple academic sources, In Residence exposes Laumeier’s audience to a variety of specialists found outside a narrowly defined “artworld” and will form an organic extension of our future curatorial programming. Our 2014 In Residence artists are archaeologists Joe Harl and Robin Machiran of the Archæological Research Center of St. Louis, who add a cross discipline expertise to Laumeier’s sculptural specialization. In addition to their research of the numerous theories regarding the origin of the Mississippian peoples, Harl and Machiran will explore the Park through their professional practice by way of a community artwork based on historical research of the domestic spaces of the Native tribes in our area. Harl’s research centers on the developments of Late Woodland (1000 BCE to 1000 CE) and Mississippian (A.D. 800 to 1600) lifestyles and cultural practices in present-day Missouri, Illinois, Kansas and Tennessee.

Machiran’s research focuses on Mississippian cultures and indigenous artifacts of the American Bottom region of North America (the flood plain of the Mississippi River, which stretches into the Metro East region of Southern Illinois, a mostly industrial area protected from flooding by a levee and drainage canal with the southern portion of the bottom being primarily agricultural land). Harl and Machiran worked with South Tech High School students and sculpture students from St. Louis Community College- Meramec to build an authentic structure titled Unstable World, was designed to make visible the theories regarding the origin of the Mississippian peoples, Harl and Machiran will explore the Park through their professional practice by way of a community artwork based on historical research of the domestic spaces of the Native tribes in our area. Harl’s research centers on the developments of Late Woodland (1000 BCE to 1000 CE) and Mississippian (A.D. 800 to 1600) lifestyles and cultural practices in present-day Missouri, Illinois, Kansas and Tennessee.

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This year we have planted beds of herbs and vegetables based on research of what the Cahokians would have cultivated to be shared with neighbors during the growing season. Previously, Kim Yasuda’s Hunt + Gather, installed as part of our 2012 exhibition Camp Out: Finding Home in an Uninhabitable World, was designed to make visible the ways in which Laumeier provides a green heart at the center of our community and to use the cultivation of a garden to modify and amplify a new set of relationships that creates a new sense of “home.” Neighbors, staff and volunteers maintain this living work and share the bounty of this native garden planted with flowering tobacco, sunflower, Wild Dagg, amaranth, wild trailing bean & Lambs Quarter. Many of these plants are common to us creating a bridge from our past that have been lost over time or through conventional modern industrial farming.

In the second iteration of our Loans That Don’t Move program is a group of “borrowed” artworks, objects and sites chosen to build on the narrative for Mound City. These cultural documents supplement the theme of the exhibition and endeavor to move the topics beyond Laumeier’s 105 acres. Our partner institutions house special collections and each is a rich resource for a more thorough look at our local history using objects along with anecdotal reference to the historical site at Cahokia and the Mississippian people who settled in this area. Sited with didactic object labels, the Loans that Don’t Move program encourages further discovery and education through public art, earthen mounds, bronze plaques, photographs and other artifacts to present a taste of the cultural and social resources on both sides of the Mississippi River.
Public art and artifacts found around St. Louis stretch back much further than Cahokia. For the Loans That Don’t Move however we focus on the geographic distribution of important sites and personalities. A figurine of a chunky player on view at the Cahokia Mounds Interpretive Center and a Chunkey stone in the collection of the St. Louis Art Museum points to the importance of games in Cahokian culture, both as a competitive sport and as a diplomatic ritual to smooth things over with hostile communities. To deepen the narrative of prehistoric settlement, a stone projectile point in the Mounds civilization that once thrived in the region is the first of five novels written by James Welch, a Native American poet, documentary scriptwriter and historical essayist and a founding author of the Native American Renaissance. My Louisiana Love, 2012, directed by Shawn Lainey Hong and produced by Monique Verdin (Houma tribe), is a profound story of love, loss and life in the Louisiana wetlands. It begins with a Houma woman’s journey to her family’s ancestral home but becomes much more when she discovers her beloved state is being destroyed and altered by the oil and gas industry. Films as a medium is an important platform to demonstrate the creative energy of Native filmmakers that engage their cultural traditions and explores indigenous contemporary issues from within.

The act of curating an exhibition based on the Native American mounds found around St. Louis is akin to voluntarily picking up and lugging hundreds of tons of cultural baggage. These landscapes, loaded with sacred meaning and historical import engender multiple interpretations about land use and history. Sugar Loaf Mound, for example, found on the St. Louis side of the river was the focus of recent disputes between private property owners, academics and tribes that spilled out into the courts. Across the river in Cahokia the mounds have become a UNESCO site with a growing international profile. Thomas Easterly’s ghostly dagueertype Big Mound During Destruction, 1889, documents the mounds removed and carted away for railway ballast by city developers in the 1850s, reveals an ugly streak of vandalism and brutal arrogance by our not so distant ancestors.

It is hard to look at these images of half-removed mounds, a torn up pyramid, deeply scarred, abject and conquered without contemplating the thoughtlessness of demolishing what could have been a remarkable source of pride for the city. Hopefully, Mound City launches a conversation focused on cultural objects both large and small, and starts to atone for past mistakes and sins.

Dana Turkovic
Curator of Exhibitions

1. Louis IV was King of France from 1226 until his death in 1270.
3. Like the Mississippians, Americans made massive changes in the landscape, which just has not survived over the years.”
4. Dred Scott was a man of color living in St. Louis (as defined then) who challenged laws allowing slavery—both before and after the Civil War which gave him an important place in the annals of American history.
6. In an email conversation with archaeologist Jay A. Keddy he notes: “no written language has been identified yet. It’s a real mystery because most societies of this type deal with some sort of written language. It’s possible that writing was placed on wood or hides, which just has not survived over the years.”
7. Like the Mississippians, Americans made massive changes in the floodplain; the destruction of wetlands along the major rivers has increased the severity of flooding over the decades.
9. Join the Mounds Project “Tour through Facebook at The Mounds - America’s First Cities to follow and support the project and for more information.
10. The Native American Renaissance is a group of writers focused on the reclamation of heritage through literary expression; the discovery and conservation of early texts by Native American authors; and a renewed interest in mythology, communicaion, ritual, and the oral tradition.
AN EXHIBITION HISTORY OF NATIVE IMAGININGS
FROM INDIGENA TO MOUND CITY
MOUND CITY ADDRESSES HOW POLITICS OF IDENTITY IMPACTS EXHIBITION-MAKING, HOW CULTURAL IDENTITY CIRCULATES AS A COMMODITY IN BOTH POPULAR CULTURE AND THE ART WORLD AND HOW WE UNDERSTAND PLACE AND BELONGING IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD, A WORLD WROUGHT WITH THE EFFECTS OF COLONIAL CONQUEST.

With its focus on indigenous art practice and St. Louis’ Native past, Mound City participates in an exhibition history that is national and international in scope. This exhibition history, a portion of which is included in the second half of this essay, originates in the early 1990s concurrent with a simultaneous turn toward a troubling of identity as a political, aesthetic and institutional exhibition framework.

Several sociopolitical events coincide with this shift in identity discourse in the art world. In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison and laws promoting racial desegregation in South Africa were instituted along with other decolonial efforts across the continent. Australia experienced historic steps forward in Aboriginal land rights, while the Oka crisis, an indigenous land dispute that included a 78-day standoff between Mohawk protesters, Canadian police and armed forces, erupted. At the heart of the crisis, which developed into the first well-publicized violent conflict between First Nations and the Canadian government in the late 20th century, was the proposed expansion of a golf course and development of condominiums on disputed land that included a Mohawk burial ground. Later that year, the U.S. passed the Indian Arts and Crafts Act. The Act simultaneously prohibits the display and sale of goods falsely marketed as “Indian produced” and problematically excludes those who may be of Indian heritage but are not members of a federally recognized tribe. All of these political struggles were further punctuated by the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ infamous arrival in North America that occurred in 1992, sparking both celebratory and critical responses.

Decolonizing efforts of the time spurred by the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ arrival in North America and critical responses to sustained lobbying of Aboriginal artists for inclusion in the Gallery’s permanent collection and exhibition spaces.

1990
INDIGENA: CONTEMPORARY NATIVE PERSPECTIVES IN CANADIAN ART
Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Canada
19 artists address 500 year history of settler colonialism from indigenous perspective

LAND, SPIRIT, POWER: FIRST NATIONS AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
Response to sustained lobbying of Aboriginal artists for inclusion in the Gallery’s permanent collection and exhibition spaces

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1995
INDIAN HUMOR
American Indian Contemporary Arts, San Francisco
87 works by 38 Native American artists explore irony and the trickster figure to counter institutionalized historical and cultural misrepresentations of Indian life

1999
RESERVATION X: THE POWER OF PLACE IN ABORIGINAL CONTEMPORARY ART
Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Ontario
Seven Native artists working in Canada and the U.S. negotiate notions of home, place, land, dwelling and identity
2002

**CHANGING HANDS: ART WITHOUT RESERVATION, 1**
American Craft Museum (now Museum of Arts and Design), New York
First in landmark series of three exhibitions that advocates for a radical repositioning of Native art within mainstream global contemporary arts; features 150 emerging and established contemporary Native American, First Nations, Métis and Inuit artists working in craft, art and design from the western prairie, plains, plateau and pacific regions of the U.S. including Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.

2005

**CHANGING HANDS, 2**
Museum of Arts and Design, New York
The second in a landmark series of three exhibitions that highlights an array of contemporary craft, art and design works produced by Native artists of the United States and Canada.

2006

**MIGRATIONS: NEW DIRECTIONS IN NATIVE AMERICAN ART**
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque
Traveling survey show of graphic work by six emerging contemporary Native American artists.

2007

**NO RESERVATIONS: NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY ART**
Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut
Features 10 Native artists of a generation born during the initial Native Rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s whose works and practices acknowledge the past and integrate contemporary global culture.

**REMIX: NEW MODERNITIES IN A POST-INDIAN WORLD**
National Museum of the American Indian, Washington and The Heard Museum of Native Cultures and Art, Phoenix
15 artists of mixed Native/non-Native backgrounds from the U.S., Canada and Mexico explore new cultural politics of identity and belonging.

**OFF THE MAP: LANDSCAPE IN THE NATIVE IMAGINATION**
National Museum of the American Indian, Washington
Five artists explore how landscape acts as an imaginary construct, as both muse and subject, as anti-colonial sentiment and as abstraction.

2009

**CURRENTS: NATIVE AMERICAN FORCES IN CONTEMPORARY ART**
Center for Visual Art, Metropolitan State College, Denver
Six contemporary artists engage in cross-cultural, cross-generational dialogue between Native American legacies and contemporary art.

2010

**VANTAGE POINT: WORKS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION**
National Museum of the American Indian, Washington
25 established and emerging indigenous multi-media artists from across the U.S., Canada and Colombia address identity, history, culture and landscape.

**HIDE: SKIN AS MATERIAL AND METAPHOR**
National Museum of the American Indian, Washington
Eight artists explore layered meanings of skin and how its symbolism emerges in contemporary Native art.

2011

**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: THE NEXT 500 YEARS**
Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art, Winnipeg, Canada
Multi-sited exhibition with over 30 Indigenous artists from across Canada, the U.S., South America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand that collectively invent provocative futures in light of indigenous struggles for sovereignty and self-determination.

2012

**SHAPESHIFTING: TRANSFORMATIONS IN NATIVE AMERICAN ART**
Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts
More than 75 historic and contemporary Native works that destabilize misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Native American art and culture; special focus on objects as art rather than as cultural or anthropological artifacts.

**THE BEAUTY OF DISTANCE: SONGS OF SURVIVAL IN A PRECARIOUS AGE**
17th Biennale of Sydney, Australia
Unprecedented inclusion of Native artists in international biennale system without explicit identity framework, though one organizing thematic of the Biennale was First Peoples and Fourth Worlds. This concept references traditional frameworks, new aesthetic languages and work made by both first and diasporic peoples who have survived suppression and marginalization.
Changing hands, 3: Contemporary Native North American Art from the Northeast and Southeast

Museum of Arts and Design, New York

Traveling group exhibition of contemporary Native art from the Northeast and Southeast; concludes a cycle of exhibitions organized over the past decade by the Museum of Arts and Design that has sought to affect a re-evaluation of present-day Native art in an international arena.

Native American Modernism

Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin

Eight years after the National Museum of the American Indian’s inaugural exhibition Native Modernism in 2004, this exhibition represents a framing of Native modern art from an international perspective and the largest collection of modern Native American Art in Europe.

Beat Nation: Art, Hip Hop and Aboriginal Culture

Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada

The 2012 iteration of this traveling exhibition coincides with the growth of Idle No More, an indigenous political movement in Canada; features paintings, sculptures, installation, performance and video works by more than 25 Native artists who incorporate elements of hip hop–mixing, sampling, and beat-making—making it an instance to address indigenous presence in the contemporary moment.

2013

All Our Relations

18th Biennale of Sydney, Australia

This exhibition moved farther away from explicit identity frameworks as modes of exhibition making and focused on collaboration; organized by a curatorial duo rather than a single director for the first time in the Biennale’s 39-year history; showcased more than 220 works by over 100 artists from Australia, the Americas, the Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, New Zealand and South Africa.

Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

First in series of quinquennial survey exhibitions focused on new trends in indigenous art production; features over 150 works by more than 80 artists from 16 countries.

Decolonize Me

The Ottawa Art Gallery, Canada

Six contemporary Aboriginal artists explore issues and outcomes of colonization and decolonization related to individual and collective Aboriginal and settler Canadian identities.

Crossing Cultures: The Owen and Wagner Collection of Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Art

The Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, New Hampshire

Showcases the Museum’s more than 100 works of contemporary Indigenous art from Australia across five decades; focuses on generations of artists since 1970 who are breathing new life into Aboriginal traditions and stories and broadening the possibilities of Indigenous art.

Just across Interstate 270 from the Laumeier site, there are also extensive traces of Native-American settlements. Everytime a box store is built in Sunset Hills, Fenton and Gravois Bluffs, Home Depot, Wal-mart or Lowe’s, archaeologists are often called in to catalog archaeological deposits from tribes that occupied the area as recently as 150 years ago.

So, as you walk around the park or fill up your gas tank and shop for the latest bargain remember that the past isn’t history, it isn’t even over. Because this story hits close to home we wanted to share an essay by Sue Sturgis that addresses this very issue...
WAL-MART’S HISTORY OF DESTROYING SACRED SITES
Unfortunately, until protections are strengthened, America’s ancient sacred places will continue to fall to the bulldozer.

A re-consecration ceremony was held this past weekend at a damaged Indian mound in Oxford, AL. As we reported last month, the 1,500-year-old sacred and archaeologically significant site was partially demolished during a taxpayer-funded economic development project, with the excavated dirt to be used as fill for construction of a Sam’s Club, a retail warehouse store owned by Wal-Mart. Following protests, the city appears to be backing away from the destruction, with a local landowner reporting that his property would be the source for the fill instead.

But it turns out the incident in Oxford is not the first time Arkansas-based Wal-Mart has been involved in the controversial destruction of sacred and/or archaeologically significant Native American sites. Reader Marlin Mackley brought to our attention a similar incident in Fenton, MO, a picturesque historic town along the Meramec River in the eastern part of the state. Inhabited for over 1,000 years, the area was home to the Fenton Mounds, a 15-year resident of Old Town Fenton I watched The story I heard was that the guy working in the vault was digging less carefully—and soon struck human bone. Recalled Debra Magruder, a member of the crew who later filed a complaint with the state: The St. Louis Riverfront Times newspaper reported how workers with SCI, the engineering firm hired to determine whether there were remains at the site, grew short on time so began digging less carefully—and soon struck human bone. Recalled Debra Magruder, a member of the crew who later filed a complaint with the state:

- The story I heard was that the guy working in that area thought it was a tree root and used some root clippers and snapped it in half. Then, when they figured out it was a femur, they just covered it and left it, half sticking out, and a looter came and ripped it out of the mound. The femur was indeed stolen the bone.

Mackley wrote on the website he created to document what happened:

As a 15-year resident of Old Town Fenton I watched... the former Fenton... Mesa as I was挖出的 was excavated. Over and above the crimes against human history perpetrated by these predatory developers we in my city have to look at the back of a plain block building set on top of a pile of rocks. The St. Louis Riverfront Times newspaper reported how workers with SCI, the engineering firm hired to determine whether there were remains at the site, grew short on time so began digging less carefully—and soon struck human bone. Recalled Debra Magruder, a member of the crew who later filed a complaint with the state:

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Doing a little digging of our own, Facing South discovered that what happened in Oxford and Fenton were not isolated instances. There have been numerous cases involving destruction of Native American burial grounds and other culturally significant sites by Wal-Mart:

- An Indian burial site in Nashville, Tenn., was demolished to build a Wal-Mart Supercenter on Charlotte Pike in the late 1990s. The company behind the project was JDN Realty of Atlanta, a developer for Wal-Mart stores since purchased by Developers Diversified Realty Corp. of Ohio. By the time excavations were completed in August 1998, the remains of 154 people including children had been taken from their graves, according to the Alliance for Native American Rights.

- In the mid-’90s, Wal-Mart developer JDN was involved in the relocation of numerous native graves while building a store in Canton, GA, Wal-Mart Watch reports. The store set up a permanent display of unearthed Indian artifacts next to its layaway counter.

- When an Indian burial ground was discovered during construction of a Wal-Mart Supercenter in the northern California community of Anderson, the company proceeded with the project anyway, opening the store in 2007. In June of this year, to make up for the site’s desecration, the store erected a bronze statue of a Native Wintu feather dancer that was vandalized before the dedication ceremony.

- In 2004, Wal-Mart opened a store in Mexico within view of the 2,000-year-old pyramids of Teotihuacan despite months of protests by local residents as well as prominent Mexican artists and intellectuals. In an interview with the Associated Press, novelist and poet Homero Aridjis compared the store’s opening to “nailing globalization’s stake in the heart of old Mexico.”

- About five years ago, while building a Sam’s Club and Wal-Mart Supercenter in Hawaii, workers unearthed 64 Native Hawaiian graves, reports Wal-Mart Watch. For at least three years afterward, the bones remained locked in a trailer, awaiting reburyal.

- What if they built a Wal-Mart at Arlington? How would people feel?” Hawaiian activist William Aila told the AP at the time. “Those individuals were buried there with the thought that they would be undisturbed for the rest of the eternity.”

There were other cases where Wal-Mart would have disturbed sacred sites but was dissuaded by protest:

- In 2001, Wal-Mart relocated a planned store in Morgantown, W.V., because it would have destroyed a Native American burial site, according to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. The decision came after company shareholders and indigenous leaders wrote letters to Wal-Mart and West Virginia state leaders protesting the chosen location.

- Five years before that, Wal-Mart scrapped a plan to build a store in the Hudson Valley community of Leeds Flat, NY, after Mohican remains were found, according to a website about the Stockbridge Munsee Tribe of Mohican Indians. For more on the case, read the account by Mohican historian and educator Debra Winschell.

In the mid-’90s, Wal-Mart developer JDN was involved in the relocation of numerous native graves while building a store in Canton, GA, Wal-Mart Watch reports. The store set up a permanent display of unearthed Indian artifacts next to its layaway counter.

- When an Indian burial ground was discovered during construction of a Wal-Mart Supercenter in the northern California community of Anderson, the company proceeded with the project anyway, opening the store in 2007. In June of this year, to make up for the site’s desecration, the store erected a bronze statue of a Native Wintu feather dancer that was vandalized before the dedication ceremony.

- In 2004, Wal-Mart opened a store in Mexico within view of the 2,000-year-old pyramids of Teotihuacan despite months of protests by local residents as well as prominent Mexican artists and intellectuals. In an interview with the Associated Press, novelist and poet Homero Aridjis compared the store’s opening to “nailing globalization’s stake in the heart of old Mexico.”

- About five years ago, while building a Sam’s Club and Wal-Mart Supercenter in Hawaii, workers unearthed 64 Native Hawaiian graves, reports Wal-Mart Watch. For at least three years afterward, the bones remained locked in a trailer, awaiting reburyal.

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In the early 1990s, Wal-Mart canceled plans to bulldoze a large Indian mound in Paso Robles, California after leaders of the Chumash and Salinan Indian Nations protested, Wal-Mart Watch reports [pdf]. The company complained the mound was blocking motorists’ view of the store.

And it’s not only Wal-Mart who’s destroying Native cultural sites. Others who’ve been involved in damaging or threatening sacred lands:

- An Indian burial site along the Cumberland River in Nashville, TN, was disturbed in the late 1990s by construction of a stadium for the Tennessee Titans, the National Football League team that was formerly the Houston Oilers. Though the project drew protests from local Indian rights advocates, then-Mayor, now Gov. Phil Bredesen defended it on the grounds that part of the site had already been disturbed by previous construction.

- When Whole Foods broke ground for its first store in the state of Hawaii, it discovered the remains of more than 20 indigenous people, according to the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. But the Texas-based company continued with the construction anyway, storing the bones in a trailer to rebury at the site later.

- WMAC radio reports that Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue is using federal economic stimulus funds to build a four-lane highway near the Ocmulgee National Monument, a site of great significance to the Muscogee (Creek) people where human occupation has been recorded for 12,000 years. The road would divide the monument from surrounding traditional cultural property, leading the nonprofit National Parks Conservation Association to place the monument among America’s most endangered national parks.

Why would the U.S. allow so much of its cultural heritage to be destroyed by development? After all, there’s no shortage of federal laws designed to protect sacred and archaeologically significant sites. They include the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, President Clinton’s Executive Order on Indian Sacred Sites, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

But a fact sheet on sacred sites prepared by the Morning Star Institute for the Coalition to Protect Native American Sacred Places during 2002 hearings by the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs points out there are no existing legal protections for certain sacred places—and “none that provide a specific cause of action to defend sacred places against desecration or destruction.”

Unfortunately, until those protections are strengthened, America’s ancient sacred places will continue to fall to the bulldozer.

SUE STURGIS
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