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Futurist Forensics: Indigenous Evidence, Cosmo-Epistemologies, and the New Red Order

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ABSTRACT This article critically engages with the emerging "media forensic" turn at the intersection of visual culture, new media practice, and humanitarian and political activism. This field purports to subvert dominant forensic and surveillant regimes, weaponizing these mediated modalities to document acts of humanitarian and political violence. Such practices have been widely celebrated for enhancing forms of legal and political accountability and justice. However, there are concerns that these practices may inadvertently mirror the state-sanctioned regimes of control and power they wish to expose, reinforcing settler-colonial histories of the forensic and evidentiary, whilst also excluding counter-hegemonic and experimental modes of emergent media investigation. To address these limitations, this article proposes a radical counter-history and praxis of the forensic, drawing on Indigenous epistemologies and critical decolonial thought. Analysing the work of the Indigenous media collective the New Red Order (NRO), the article argues that their ongoing *Culture Capture* project (2017–) exemplifies a counter-hegemonic mode of emergent media forensic practice. By asserting Indigenous epistemological agency over such modes of media investigation, the NRO challenges Western forensic practices' hegemony. The article advocates for expanding the scope of media forensic work to include diverse publics, communities, and aesthetic-political practices that offer subversive, decolonial forms of evidentiary practice.

KEYWORDS activism, art, Indigenous epistemology, new media, settler colonialism

Introduction

We have recently witnessed a "media forensic" turn, operating at the intersection of visual culture, human rights activism, and new media practice. Within this emergent field, dominant forensic and evidentiary techniques are

subverted—taken up to create archives that document acts of state and corporate violence. These visual modalities are thus weaponized against their own violent and surveillant logics.[1] Such modes of forensic counter-praxis have been widely embraced, heralded as opening new modalities of accountability and resistance.[2] This article begins by briefly examining the conceptual and practical limitations of the emerging forensic turn. It argues that there is a risk that such practices unquestioningly mirror or mimic visual modalities of the state-sanctioned forensic and surveillance regimes that they wish to critique, problematically re-stabilizing settler-colonial ontologies, visualities, and histories of the evidentiary and forensic. Moreover, it suggests that such forms of mirroring or mimicry risk excluding counter-hegemonic and subaltern modes of evidentiary and investigative work.[3]

To redress the shortcomings of such modes of practice, the rest of the article maps out a radical counter-history and contemporary praxis of the forensic, one that is indebted to Indigenous epistemologies and attendant modes of critical decolonial thought. Engaging with the Indigenous media collective the New Red Order, the article reads their recent *Culture Capture* project as constitutive of a radically counter-hegemonic mode of media forensic practice. It argues that the New Red Order have fostered an Indigenously-structured mode of evidentiary work that aims to reassert Indigenous epistemological agency in contemporary modes of media investigation, whilst also highlighting the crucial place of Indigenous cosmologies in the broader histories of the evidentiary and forensic. Building on Joseph Pugliese's important work in this area, the article examines how modern Western forensic practices have deep points of interconnection with, and are often indebted to, Indigenous cosmologies and animistic thought.[4] The work of the New Red Order aims to revivify the links to these foundational Indigenous epistemologies. Through this examination, the article argues that the scope of the domains within which such counter forensic work can be conducted must be expanded, re-examining which publics, communities, and aesthetic-political practices can be included in its scope, as they offer speculative, experimental, and counter-

hegemonic forms of evidentiary practice to resist multifarious forms of settler-colonial and neo-colonial violence.

Limits of the Media Forensic

A range of artists, researchers, and media collectives have developed and deployed emergent media tools to transform the roles that the aesthetic and technological play in the mediation of visual evidence and its capacity to intervene in humanitarian, social, and political struggle. Much of this work, which I have elsewhere termed "mediated forensics," is broadly defined as "a process of collectively assembling accounts of incidents from media flotsam . . . noticing unintentional evidence registered in visual, audio or data files or in the material composition of our environment."[5] Such processes of investigation and assemblage are conducted through the utilization of emergent tools and technologies (photogrammetry, 3D modelling and scanning, geolocation, pattern analysis, remote sensing and mapping, computer vision, amongst others) to help synthesize, examine, and recompose varied forms of evidence. Through this approach, diverse types of evidence are examined and transformed to generate alternative archives aimed at building new modes of accountability and resistance.

The concept of the counter forensic was originally put forward by photographer and theorist Allan Sekula. Much of his work focused on an exploration of the relationship between visual culture, evidence, and human rights. For him, the practice of counter forensics aimed to re-weaponize forms of state-produced forensic visual evidence, creating counter-archives that could hold to account the same networks of power responsible for generating them.[6] As Thomas Keenan suggests, counter forensics "refers to nothing less than the adoption of forensic techniques as a practice of 'political manoeuvring,' as a tactical operation in a collective struggle, a rogues' gallery to document the microphysics of barbarism."[7] Thus, the "counter" of the counter forensic highlights the need to subversively take up forms of visual

material that are often produced by those responsible for such acts of "barbarism." As Keenan continues, "the history of . . . forensics is marked by this asymmetrical reversal of state policing techniques into tactics for resisting and challenging injustice."[8] Up until now, the deployment of counter forensic strategies and practices across a wide variety of media investigations have been widely accepted. The forensic has become a malleable conceptual armature through which to examine the interconnections between the technological, aesthetic, legal, and political in an era of data oversaturation, post-truth politics, and misinformation.

Here, I want to briefly consider the limitations of such contemporary counter forensic work. As I've argued elsewhere, specifically in relation to projects exposing acts of environmental violence, these countering practices frequently replicate hypervisible and transparent methods of visualization and mediation that have long shaped approaches—and perceptions—of top-down state surveillance, oversight, and control.[9] Such forms of mirroring or mimicry risk a reproduction of the forensic "colonial gaze," in so far as they rely on similar occularcentric modes of visualization and address. To provide an example of a project that risks such forensic mirroring and mimicry, let us briefly focus on the National Monument Audit, produced by Monument Lab in partnership with the Mellon Foundation.

Fig. 1 Screenshot of “Monument Study Set Search Interface.”

Monument Lab is a nonprofit public art, history, and design studio based in Philadelphia. They aim to reimagine monuments as “spaces for belonging, learning, and healing.” As their mission statement suggests, they believe “that our unreconciled past and our inherited monument landscape continue to reinforce systems of injustice, haunt our present, and impact our individual and collective futures.”[10] One of their flagship projects was the 2021 National Monument Audit. The Monument Lab team spent half a year “scouring almost a half million records of historic properties created and maintained by federal, state, local, tribal, institutional, and publicly assembled sources.”[11] They collected data on a study set of 50,000 monuments, aiming to “better understand the dynamics and trends that have shaped our monument landscape, to pose questions about common knowledge about monuments, and to debunk falsehoods and misperceptions within public memory.”[12] One of the central outputs from the project was the Monument Study Set Search Interface, which allows users to explore an interactive archive of documented monuments. The interface consists of a navigable map of the United States,

divided by county. Clicking on a county zooms the user into a localized map of the area, with each archived monument represented by a blue marker. Opening the individual record for each monument provides a whole raft of additional information: photographs; description; historical data; specific geographical coordinates; location description; object group (monument, bust, statue etc.); and a list of featured subjects. The project is an important intervention, undertaken following several nationwide protests from 2017 onwards, which were a response to the white nationalist rallies in Charlottesville, Virginia, opposing the decision of the city council to remove the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee in Lee Park.

The project is a clear example of a counter forensic practice, utilizing publicly accessible digital records and media artefacts to construct a counter archive of the United States' forms of public memorialization. Indeed, two of the key findings from the project are that "the monument landscape is overwhelmingly white and male" and "the most common features of the American monuments reflect war and conquest."[13] However, it is arguable that the cartographic form of the interface is both politically problematic and limiting. It is well known that cartographic practices were integral to the operations and expansions of settler-colonial projects globally, both historically and contemporarily.[14] For example, Jeffrey C. Stone has explored how maps were not merely passive, objective tools for representation but were also active instruments of power that facilitated and legitimized colonial expansion.[15] Stone examines how mapping practices helped organize colonial administrative systems; aid in military campaigns; streamline economic exploitation; and further propaganda initiatives, to name but a few. Ultimately, cartographic practices tend to concentrate power and agency in the hands of those who construct them.

Counter forensic practices like the National Monument Audit risk inadvertently reproducing the forensic "colonial gaze," in so far as they rely on similar cartographic modes of visualization and address. Nishat Awan, focusing on similar mapping projects, suggests that "such seeing operates through a fantasy of a frictionless world that can be accessed by zooming in and out of

far-flung places viewed through scopic regimes that render certain aspects hyper visible while obscuring others."[16] For her, whilst such cartographic practices "allow us to 'see' further and deeper into places that are at a distance from us," they also create "conditions that make certain racialized and subaltern subjects recede from view."[17] Whilst providing a mesmerizing digital archive, projects such as this risk eliding "embodied experience while assuming making visible to be an emancipatory act in itself."[18] Thus, there is a risk that Monument Lab's desires for hyper visibility within their mapping project means that the agency of the diverse communities whose daily lives are impacted by these monuments and statues is not adequately accounted for within the fabric of its design. How do these groups envisage the futures of these monuments? What forms of redress or justice do they imagine? Such elements could, and should, have shaped the very design of the audit and its interface.[19]

As suggested previously, such forms of counter forensic work risk drawing us back to the very forms of settler-colonial control that they seek to push back against. The risk here is that there is a mirroring or mimicry of dominant surveillant technologies and visualities that are always indelibly connected to the longer punitive and colonial histories of forensic and documentary work. Indeed, as Pugliese has suggested, we cannot forget that modern forensics emerged as a techno-scientific epistemology that both enacted and legitimated racist, punitive, and surveillant forms of state control and violence.[20] These engrained cultural and technological histories of the forensic have not been adequately accounted for within this emergent discourse and praxis. I have argued elsewhere that the tendency for such emergent practices to "mirror" or "mimic" arguably responds to what James Frieze has termed a broader cultural "economy of legibility," a "cultural imperative for justice not only to be done but to be seen to be done . . . a dominant cultural logic that instrumentalises the forensic's promise to colonise knowledge."[21] There is a risk that these practices replicate the very modes of the forensic and surveillant that they wish to subversively engage. They are drawn back into the wider "economy of legibility" from which they wish to break away. Moreover, by

remaining wedded to dominant modalities and visualities of the forensic and surveillant, such modes of counter-praxis risk bypassing alternative experimental, counter-hegemonic, and decolonial modalities of evidentiary and documentary work.

Here, my aim is to suggest that we must confront the historical formation and contemporary cultural uptake of the forensic as it is embraced and deployed across increasingly diverse fields of practice. I want to emphasize that powerful, counter-hegemonic modes of forensic investigation are emerging. By embracing a more poly-perspectival definition of the forensic, we can begin to consider the radical potential of these alternative modes of investigatory work. At their most powerful, forms of investigation must be non-hegemonic, non-hierarchical practices, and, as a result, widening the scales across which we can read the "counter forensic" as a form of cultural and connective practice is crucial. Indeed, one of the most powerful and politically productive facets of the contemporary turn to the forensic is its foregrounding of the notion of the "forum" as a space of communal and collective gathering and debate.
The word "forensic" comes from the Latin word *forensis*, which has its etymology in the "forum." As Eyal Weizman has suggested, "when the Roman orators . . . used the term, they referred to more than just the legal sphere. The forum was a chaotic and multidimensional domain . . . in which both people and things participated and were presented."[22] However, when the emphasis is placed on logics of hypervisibility, mastery, and legibility, the productive multidimensionality of the forensic as a particular modality of "forum work" is, to a certain extent, bypassed. Thus, this paper aims to re-situate the multidimensionality of the forum that exists at the etymological base of the forensic. I want to suggest that we must push for a conceptualization of the forensic as a *communal and multitudinous* set of spaces and sites—as well as an experimental and counter-hegemonic variety of practices—rather than a limited set of emergent technical and technological dispositifs. We must expand the scope of the domains within which such forensic work can be conducted, re-examining which publics, communities, and aesthetic-political practices can be included in its scope, as they might allow speculative and

counter-hegemonic forms of investigatory practice to emerge. This is where the radical potential of the forensic lies, in its multifaceted base.

Futurist Forensics

To examine the possible radical and alternative futures of the forensic and its modes of investigation, I want to map out a counter-history and counter-praxis of the forensic. To offer an example of such a mode of counter-praxis, I will focus on the work of the Indigenous media collective the New Red Order (referred to as the NRO hereafter). The group works across different media forms—video, installation, sculpture, performance—blending satire, humor, and political critique "to create grounds for Indigenous futures."[23] The group is headed by Ojibwe brothers and filmmakers Adam Khalil and Zack Khalil and Tlingit visual artist Jackson Polys.[24] The name is a reference to the Improved Order of the Red Men (referred to as the IORM hereafter), a fraternal secret society organization established in North America in 1834. As Adam Khalil suggests, "it's like Freemasons, except they dressed up as Indians."[25] Indeed, "playing Indian" was a key dimension of the IORM's early activities. As Jackson Polys suggests, "these are dynamics that were part of the desire to feel at home . . . to differentiate one's self from a prior lineage. This was combined with the desire to eliminate the savage, but also to become the savage . . . one would 'play Indian', to embody one's own fantasy, and . . . in some ways, make that fantasy become reality."[26] The NRO subverts and re-weaponizes many of the deeply racist and settler-colonial logics of the IORM, developing a radically subversive version of this settler-colonial secret society.

Indeed, the NRO clearly mark themselves out as a "public secret society." This framing has a two-layered meaning for the group. Firstly, it highlights that they are a decidedly open and collaborative organization: "anyone can become a member of the New Red Order," says Adam Khalil, though "there has to be a willingness to become an accomplice."[27] Indeed, the group is formed of a rotating network of settler "informants and accomplices" who participate in

acts of decolonial praxis. Secondly, the group also interpolate Michael Taussig's articulation of "the public secret" into their framing as a public secret society. For Taussig, the public secret is "that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated."[28] The concept of the "public secret" entails the formation of individuals who are aware of certain knowledge that they must not acknowledge.[29] As Adam Khalil has suggested, within the US context, the biggest public secret is the fact that the country "is predicated on the removal and replacement of Indigenous people."[30] Thus, the group takes up this dual meaning of the "public secret" to forge a public network of "informants and accomplices" that try and decolonially expose and subvert US settler-colonialism and its attendant logics of subjugation.

Here, I will primarily focus on the group's ongoing *Culture Capture* project (2017–). The central strand of the project is a multimedia and multi-sited investigation exploring the potentialities of digitally recreating and animating US settler-colonial monuments and statues through techniques of 3D scanning/modelling. The project responds (and builds upon) both the settler-colonial statue protests across the United States, as well as the longer histories of Indigenous opposition to broader forms of settler-colonial monumentalization. These protests led to the removal of many settler-colonial monuments throughout the country. However, for the NRO, such desires for "removal" failed to acknowledge the term's long and charged history for Native American peoples.[31] Opposing such desires for removal, the NRO aimed to build "additive or subtractive approaches, for *revising* the monuments themselves."[32] Using 3D laser scanners, 360 degree cameras, and photogrammetry techniques, the NRO set out to digitally document and "capture" a wide variety of settler-colonial monuments across the US. From these acts of digital capture, the group then created digital 3D replicas of the monuments that could be animated, morphed, and recomposed. For the NRO, these technologies enabled the group to make "additive interventions into pre-existing things, as opposed to advocating for their removal or destruction."[33] Within this project, a similar set of cultural objects are examined through visual techniques typically associated with counter forensic media practices (3D

modelling and digital photogrammetry). These are utilized to investigate histories of settler-colonial violence and attendant modes of memorialization. However, whilst the NRO takes up a similar set of objects to the Monument Lab audit, I want to argue that a markedly different *counter-epistemology* of the forensic emerges in their work. I want to contend that the NRO takes up these emerging investigative techniques and technologies to make two primary interventions.

Firstly, their work aims to craft a radically decolonial and futurist forensic practice—one that operates in markedly different ways to the emergent counter forensic practices explored at the outset of this paper. The work of the NRO forces us to consider a broader Indigenous counter-history and counter-praxis of the forensic, which moves us away from its connections to Western scientific and cartographic epistemologies and back towards its foundations within Indigenous animist and cosmological thinking. As we shall see, the 3D models created by the NRO do not result in stable simulacra of the settler colonial statues captured. Instead, their digital models morph and shift, imbuing them with a decidedly *animistic* force. Pugliese has explored the historical connections between Western forensic practices and Indigenous animist cosmologies. He argues that Indigenous animistic thought, which views the world as filled with active entities, has parallels with modern Western forensic science. Despite the crucial role of Indigenous forensic expertise, Pugliese contends that it is often marginalized and excluded from Western forensic histories, reinforcing a dichotomy that dismisses Indigenous practices as superstitions "infra-epistemologies" and prevents the recognition of Native science.[34] Thus, I argue that the NRO fashions a radically alternative mode of experimental and counter-hegemonic forensic practice that is drawn back to the animistic roots of Native science and broader cosmological ontologies.[35] This mode of decolonial forensic practice undermines and disrupts the forensics' deep historical entwinements with settler-colonial violence and surveillance.[36]

Secondly, this alternative approach to the forensic also asks us to consider radical alternatives to hegemonic conceptualizations of ontological truth, realism, and facticity. I argue that the work of the NRO fashions alternative modalities of "truth construction" that move us away from the modes of documentation and stable facticity found in the contemporary constellation of counter forensic work examined above (which are always tainted by their imbrication into the broader "economies of legibility" that Frieze delineates). Within the work of the NRO, the 3D models are subversively captured, animated, and morphed—becoming active, fluid agglomerations that serve to deconstruct the stable settler-colonial realities and narratives embodied, quite literally, by their physical counterparts. Indeed, the group have spoken of their desire for their work to "commit crimes against reality."[37] These realities the NRO speak of are the manifold hegemonies that structure the settler-colonial state. Thus, tied into this commitment to deconstruct such realities is a simultaneous desire to generate alternative, Indigenously-informed futurities. These alternative modes of evidentiary and forensic work found in the NRO's practice opens us up to conceptual frameworks akin to Toby Lee's notion of "unreality effects" or LaCharles Ward's concept of "Black visual evidence," which can offer a "counter visual archive of the legally permissible."[38] For them, it is crucial to understand how the evidentiary and forensic have always served to prop up the settler-colonial state, whilst simultaneously destroying racialized lifeworlds. However, for Lee and Ward, there are fundamental ways in which the forensic and evidentiary can "operate otherwise"[39] or invite us "to reimagine the grounds of the evidentiary."[40] Thus, building from these interventions into contemporary modes of counter evidentiary work, I want to suggest that the NRO is similarly invested in developing speculative, experimental, and counter-hegemonic forms of evidentiary practice to resist multifarious forms of settler-colonial violence.[41] In the next section of this article, I turn to one of the video works that forms part of the broader *Culture Capture* project, initially examining how the aesthetic and discursive strategies employed by the NRO help them to construct their "crimes" against settler-colonial realities. From here, I then turn to the broader linkages between forensic histories and Indigenous epistemologies, arguing that the NRO

develops a counter-hegemonic forensics that is rooted in the animistic foundations of Native science and broader cosmological epistemologies.

Crimes Against Reality: *Culture Capture: Terminal Addition*

Currently, three video works and several installations make up the Culture Capture project: *Culture Capture 001*, 2017; *Culture Capture: Terminal Addition*, 2019; *Culture Capture: Crimes Against Reality*, 2020. To help map out the theoretical and political stakes of such a futurist-oriented forensic practice, here I will focus on the project's second video work, *Culture Capture: Terminal Addition*. This work offers a good distillation of the project's overall conceptual and thematic concerns, whilst also opening up powerful points of interconnection to the previously-examined forensic turn in media culture. The film opens with a compilation of interwoven clips from a variety of 2017 news reports documenting various "vandalized" and defaced settler-colonial monuments across the United States. Initially, we are presented with several Christopher Columbus statues across the state of Connecticut, another in the city of Baltimore, Maryland, and, finally, one in Houston, Texas, all of which have been coated—to varying degrees—in red paint. In addition, we are presented with news footage of a freshly beheaded statue of Franciscan friar Junipero Serra outside the Old Mission in Santa Barbara, California. Under Serra's leadership, many "thousands of Native Americans across Alta California were absorbed into Catholic missions" where they were "pressed into forced labour and infected with diseases to which they had no resistance"—acts of settler-colonial violence that were tantamount to cultural genocide.[42] As we are shown shots of the now covered lump of the Serra statue outside the Old Mission building, the reporter suggests that this act of concealment was done to "keep the graphic scene from the view of visitors."

Fig. 2 Stills from *Culture Capture: Terminal Addition* (2019).

In the case of the Serra statue, it is arguable that a triple logic of "removal" is in operation. Firstly, we have the statue's iconophilic memorialization of a figure who was responsible for the violent, genocidal erasure of Alta California's Indigenous communities. Secondly, we have the protesters' removal of Serra's head, precisely as an act of protest against the memorialization of the first act of erasure. Thirdly, we have the concealment of the beheaded statue, precisely as a way to remove the "graphic scene" from the public's field of vision. As the voice of the final new reporter fades, the final line of their monologue states that these acts of defacement and protest come "amid an ongoing debate over confederate statues across the US."

After the opening news reports, the film then moves into a sequence of rapid montage. Here, we are presented with a vast archive of images documenting the work of James Earle Fraser. Fraser was an American sculptor whose work was informed by his settler-colonial, frontier upbringing across the West of the United States. Each archival image remains present for just a split second,

documenting the working practice of Fraser as well as partially finished models and renderings of his statues. We see Fraser working on clay models, and we see photographic portraits of Native Americans for use in future works. The rapidity of this montage seems to be focused less on the individual development of his statues as discreet artworks. Rather, through the cumulative bricolage of this archival montage, the NRO seems to point towards Fraser's broader obsession with Native American culture.[43]

Fig. 3 Stills from *Culture Capture: Terminal Addition* (2019).

This dual settler-colonial desire for both assimilation and domination forms a key part of the NRO's critical praxis, and is expressed particularly acutely in the next section of *Terminal Addition*.[44]

A close-up on the hair and forehead of Fraser's 1919 bust sculpture of Theodore Roosevelt (entitled *Theodore Roosevelt as Rough Rider*), transitions to a match cut shot of Jim Fletcher, one of the NRO's collaborators. In other works, Fletcher, an established avant-garde actor, describes himself as a

"reformed Native American impersonator."[45] Over the matched shot of Fletcher's forehead, we hear him whisper "images that represent the settlement of this land unconsciously inform our inability to comprehend our settler reality." Next, Fletcher addresses the camera directly, stating "I'm an accomplice to Indigenous people, and for the purpose of this video you can think of me as their proxy." Fletcher's narration continues during the next sequence, which examines another statue. We are no longer in the archive, instead we find ourselves outside in a courtyard, on a grey, overcast day. A wide angle establishing shot frames this new statue centrally in the image. A figure stands atop a crop of rocks, their head tilted and body contorted as they point a fully drawn bow towards the sky. This is the *Saltine Warrior*, outside the Carnegie Library at Syracuse University. We move from the opening wide shot of the statue to a closer, low angle shot, framing the statue's torso. A series of red laser lines begin to cut across the statue, scanning its form and contours. Next, we see a figure clad in a translucent silicone mask. The mask covers their whole head, rendering them faceless and unidentifiable. The silicone has a partially melted appearance, almost creating an illusion that their head is gradually dissolving.

These are the NRO's non-Native accomplices, masked to protect their identities and simultaneously to allow them to engage in acts of "playing Indian"—exploring the attendant "unseemly desires and inappropriate impulses" that such play produces. Again, we are reminded of the acts of appropriation that structured the early activities of the IORM. Here, however, such acts of playing Indian are counter-hegemonically subverted, with the non-Native figures functioning as the NRO's accomplices and informants—operating against their own settler-colonial ideologies and histories, documenting these monuments so that they can be animistically deformed and altered. The accomplice holds a portable 360-degree camera in one hand and a laser scanner in the other, digitally capturing and documenting the statue. Over this image, we hear Fletcher's earlier statement once again, "images that represent the settlement of this land unconsciously inform our inability to comprehend our settler reality." Here, we move into another rapid montage,

this time with shots that move us 360 degrees around the statue. Another masked figure holding similar scanning devices enters the frame, scanning between the statue's legs.

Fig. 4 Stills from *Culture Capture: Terminal Addition* (2019).

A third masked figure performs a smudging ritual, a ceremonial burning of medicinal or sacred plants as an act of purification and cleansing. We then shift to a black screen, with a 3D rendered model of the statue—clearly generated from these multiple acts of scanning and capture— circling in the centre. The image occasionally glitches, shifting us between the empty virtual space of the black screen and the material site of the courtyard.

As touched upon at the opening of this section, in *Terminal Addition*, and across the *Culture Capture* project more broadly, there is a consistent emphasis on pushing back against the cultural logics and desires for "removal" when confronting the vexed histories of settler-colonial modes of monumentalization. Summarizing the work, the NRO suggests,

the concept of “removal’ is central to current debates about whether to remove problematic historical monuments— for example, Confederate war monuments in the South. It was also in the name of the Indian Removal Act, signed into law by President Jackson, which resulted in the displacement and death of thousands of Native peoples in what we now call the ‘Trail of Tears.’ Both present removal as a quick fix.[46]

Thus, for the NRO, myriad forms of removal have structured Indigenous life under the settler-colonial state. For example, the 1830 Indian Removal Act initiated the Trail of Tears, leading to over 46,000 Native Americans being forcibly relocated to “Indian Territory” (now Oklahoma) and the deaths of over 4,000 due to disease, starvation, and harsh weather conditions. Thus, for Native American communities there is a deep history of settler-colonial violence associated with practices of removal, which extend back to these acts of forcible relocation and erasure. As a result, there was a certain hesitance—or perhaps even resistance—from the group to simply embrace the desires and logics of “removal” and “erasure” that were strong affective and political drivers in the rapid spread of the 2017 statue protests.

As Adam Khalil suggests elsewhere, “that kind of iconoclasm we have some trepidation around, because it’s also the same means that the settler colonial nation has used against us.”[47] To simply remove objects that monumentalize, in myriad ways, the settler-colonial foundations of the United States perhaps serves to only further erase the histories and continuing contemporary realities of settler-colonial violence from the wider cultural and public imaginary. Indeed, as the NRO have suggested elsewhere, “there’s a double-edged sword with indigeneity and erasure. Representation of Indian people is ubiquitous but it’s also going away.”[48] Conversely, a desire to simply preserve such monuments moves us back towards the events that were the touch paper of the 2017 protests, for example, the white nationalist rallies in Charlottesville, Virginia throughout the earlier part of the year in the defense of the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee in Lee Park.

To find a way out of this bind—between the desires for removal and preservation—the NRO proposed an "additive" and *animistic* approach instead. This logic was aimed at making "something new as opposed to tearing something down . . . the idea . . . was to take an additive approach to these types of complicated monuments. It's this kind of cumulative gesture that could maybe lead to more interesting futures than erasing and hiding [things]."[49] Thus, within *Culture Capture*, emergent media technologies and tools (primarily photogrammetry and 3D scanning and modelling) are taken up to additively alter and morph such objects of monumentalization, challenging what the NRO perceived to be the "quick fixes" of erasure and removal on the one hand, and the reactionary (and often white supremacist) desires for total preservation on the other. The slippery ontological ground between these two positions became a space of productive epistemological and political traction for the NRO.

In the film's final section, we move back inside the library archive, where the masked figures are now photographing various settler statues and models on their smartphones. They begin to crowd around Fraser's perhaps most infamous work, *End of the Trail*. The statue depicts a Native American figure slumped forward on his horse, weary and fatigued. Archival images documenting the construction of the statue are intercut with the performative documentations in the space of the archive. Next, a 3D model of the statue is overlaid and begins to circle in the centre of the screen. Slowly, the archival images recede and we are left with the model circling at the centre of a black screen. The model shifts from a dull dark grey concrete to a red crystalline form. The shape of the monument then begins to expand and contract, becoming an amorphous blob extending in various directions at various speeds. We then shift into a rapid montage documenting a range of other statues, as another voice speaks: "the society of statues is mortal. One day their faces of stone crumble and fall to earth. This botany of death is what we call culture and this is how we capture it."

Through the deployment of such emergent modes of visual media practice, they were able to forge and mold animistic iterations of these monuments that were constantly unstable, existing in a state of productive flux. The desires for removal and preservation are both undergirded by logics of fixity and finality (the statue remains, or it is removed). The animistic approach of the NRO pushes for a more unstable and indeterminate mode of investigating such forms of monumentalization. The modes of destabilization and indeterminacy introduced by the NRO's animistic methodology can be understood in relation to broader epistemologies of Indigenous futurism. As Toby Lee has suggested, in her analysis of Khalil's earlier documentary work, the aim of such indeterminacy is to "reconfigure the relations between people, histories, and environment . . . its parallel and larger project is to mobilize the disquieting power of the Indigenous uncanny against the structures of the real."[50] The animistic and additive logics employed by the NRO's digital remodelling arguably also unfurls the "disquieting power" of the "Indigenous uncanny" against the settler-colonial realities that are solidified in these monuments. The shifting and amorphous structures of these animated digital simulations arguably serves to collapse the myths and lies upon which the United States as a settler-colonial state is built.

The final monument the documenters survey is the Columbus Monument in the centre of Syracuse. Again, they employ similar tactics and technologies to develop a 3D rendering of the statue. This digital rendering then appears on screen, animistically morphing and shifting in a similar fashion to the *End of the Trail*. Spreading outwards, with a gelatinous yet distinctly crystalline form, the statue becomes an amorphous lump, before finally disappearing completely. As Patrick Harrison suggests, "the computer simulacra of their beloved landmarks metastasize into bulging . . . gobs of necrotic, glitchy, digi-flesh and self-destruct."[51] Indeed, these fleshy digital duplicates become the structuring focus of the film's climax.

Fig. 5. Stills from *Culture Capture: Terminal Addition* (2019).

As briefly mentioned at the opening of this section, the modes of technological visioning used within the *Culture Capture* project are also found across a wide range of the counter forensic media practices. There are multiple examples of the use of photogrammetry and 3D scanning and modelling to investigate, remodel, and recreate sites and spaces of political violence. Both modes of practice have a shared desire to take up such modes of technological visioning to investigate and expose instances of state, corporate, and colonial violence. At the same time however, there are clearly marked differences between the NRO's mode of additive and animistic editing and those modes of counter forensic practice examined at the outset of this paper.

Here, the NRO's embrace of these technologies functions in direct opposition to the "economy of legibility" that often consumes the counter forensic. Within the *Culture Capture* project, these modes of additive and animistic morphing and editing seek to destabilize contemporary settler-colonial realities and their attendant desires for both monumentalization and dissolution.[52] As

Christopher Green suggests, "anticolonial struggle, the NRO maintains, must reconfigure colonial structures—including through crimes against present-day representation and reality—in order that they can be transformed."[53] In direct opposition to the counter forensics' "economy of legibility," the NRO enacts "crimes against reality," precisely to try and imagine alternative, Indigenously-informed and structured futurities. The NRO aims to edit and morph settler-colonial realities, rather than risk a slippage back into the "economy of legibility." Whilst the contemporary counter forensic methodology is based on replicating the dominant visual frameworks of authority, regulation, and simplistic clarity that have supported the public perception of forensic practices for decades, the NRO employ similar emerging media tools to deconstruct settler-colonial realities and execute their "crimes against reality." If there seems to be such a stark opposition here, between the economy of legibility that undergirds the counter forensic and "crimes against reality" that are crucial to the work of the NRO, why might it be productive to read the work of the latter as potentially constitutive of a mode of specifically *forensic* futurism? More basically, what is the connection between the practice of the NRO and these wider forensic epistemologies, beyond the presence of a set of technological practices that are markedly similar those explored at the outset of this article? In the final section of this paper, I would like to turn back to the basic tenets of the forensic and its deep historical entanglements with Indigenous modes of thought and material practice. By mapping out this counter-history, I want to demonstrate how the work of the NRO aims to revivify connections to such Indigenous evidentiary histories and cosmologies.

Indigenous Counter-Epistemologies

In his book *Biopolitics of the More-Than-Human: Forensic Ecologies of Violence*, Pugliese traces the deep historical interconnection between contemporary Western understandings of the forensic (which he reads primarily as a scientific-criminalistic epistemology) and Indigenous "animist cosmologies and epistemologies."[54] As Pugliese suggests, building on the

work of Gregory Cajete, Indigenous animistic thought "choreographs one's engagement with the entities of the world; [it] . . . continually relates to and speaks of the world as full of active entities with which people engage."[55] Quoting Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Pugliese continues on to suggest that within such animist epistemologies, "the 'distinction between society and nature is internal to the social world,' thereby overturning the Eurocentric nature/culture binary that relegates nature to an external nonsocial world from which science extracts its truths and facts. In this worldview, the 'diverse type of actants or subjective agents' include 'gods, animals, the dead, plants, meteorological phenomena, and often objects or artifacts as well.'"[56] Pugliese argues that a similar animist logic also informs modern Western forensic science, but its deep connections to such Indigenous ontologies have been severed:

Regardless of the crucial role of Indigenous forensic expertise across both domestic and international contexts, Indigenous forensic science simply fails to figure in the annals of Western forensic histories. The effacement of Indigenous forensics from the Western canon is crucial in enabling Western science to secure the scientificity of its own practices precisely by categorizing Indigenous forensics as little more than (un)canny folk know-how, animist superstitions, or infraepistemologies that are dispatched beyond the policed domains of certified scientific knowledge; what becomes unthinkable in such a dichotomous schema, thus, is the very possibility of Native science.[57]

Here, Pugliese draws on the example of how Western colonial police forces in Australia employed "Indigenous trackers to find escaped criminals or lost civilians in the bush precisely because of their unerring capacity to be acutely attentive to the trace evidence inscribed in the landscape when tracking their subjects."[58] Despite exploiting the Indigenous trackers' deep reciprocal knowledge of the land, their abilities were simultaneously "rendered 'uncanny'" by the colonial police "through the occlusion and/or dismissal of their avowedly animist understanding of the land and all its entities."[59] Here then we find a particular double logic of co-optation and dismissal in place: A logic that at

once exploited Indigenous trackers for their knowledge and labor whilst simultaneously framing (and disavowing) their work as fantastical, superstitious, or primitive.

Thus, within what he terms contemporary Western forensics' "disavowed animism," we find a similar emphasis on how mute objects are animated and allowed to testify. However, their ability to speak is always reliant on the rhetorical intervention of the certified (Western) scientific or criminalist expert; they are "'mute objects' that dumbly await the scientist to be brought to speaking life."[60] Pugliese suggests that such Indigenous animistic epistemologies thus "haunt the field of forensic science . . . forensics . . . is a field where the epistemology of Western science unreflexively crosses over into the domain of animist cosmologies and epistemologies."[61] A central aim of Pugliese's book is to place such Indigenous animist epistemologies at the heart of a retooled mode of forensic investigation, creating a methodology that better accounts for more-than-human actants and subjective agents. Moreover, such a retooled notion of the forensic also aims to emphasize the evidentiary and investigative capacities of speculative modes of Indigenous thought and practice, what Pugliese terms "cosmo-epistemologies." Such cosmo-epistemologies are aimed at a refusal of "Euro-anthropocentric perspectives" and instead radically embrace "eco-ethical worldviews" of "relationality and animism."[62] Here then, I want to suggest that the animistic digital statues of *Terminal Addition* move us towards a conceptualization of the forensic that is firmly regrounded in the animism that structures the Indigenous "cosmo-epistemologies" that de Castro and Pugliese speak of. These fluid and shifting digital surrogates take on a life of their own, undermining the concretized settler-colonial realities of their physical counterparts.

Fig. 6 Aboriginal tracker in Fremantle, 1934.

The economies of legibility that structure the counter forensic practices we examined at the opening of this paper are still based on modes of realism and evidence that are determined by the settler-colonial state (and their apertures of visioning). They are insufficient and must be radically morphed and shifted, allowing for the emergence of alternative Indigenous modes of forensic and investigative work. Within *Culture Capture*, the objects of settler colonial violence and attendant monumentalization are imbued with animistic properties through the additive processes of scanning and modelling. They are morphed and altered, imbricated into a mode of cosmo-epistemlogical forensic analysis that reclaims the potentialities of Native science and simultaneously cracks apart contemporary settler-colonial realities. As Noah Caspar has argued, "these rendered models, generated from differently angled captured photographs, are then mutated via a glitch, or series of phase changes, that transforms them. This glitch, or interruption of normalcy, calls for a reevaluation of hegemonic relations that we refer to as reality."[63] Thus, through the animistic morphing and deforming of these settler-colonial monuments,

the NRO enact their "crimes against reality" through the development of an Indigenously-informed mode of forensic practice. More precisely, there is a continued desire to reclaim the forensic's "disavowed animism," centering a counter-hegemonic mode of Indigenous forensic and evidentiary practice. Thus, to read this project as a mode of futurist forensics is to understand how *Culture Capture* returns us to the animistic and cosmological basis of an Indigenous mode of forensics that, as Pugliese suggests, has been effaced within its modern Western criminalistic and scientific modalities. What this rereading also does is to expand the scope of the forensic as a mode of investigative cultural praxis. The forensic cannot be limited to narrow Western scientific epistemologies. It must be expanded, reexamining which publics, communities, and aesthetic-political practices can be included in its scope. The work of this paper has been to expand the boundaries of the forensic through a refocusing on the crucial role of Indigenous animism and cosmo-epistemological thought.

In her powerful critique of the emerging counter-forensic turn in visual media culture, Nishat Awan has suggested that we need to find new modes of "counter-navigation that allow other ways of moving through what are increasingly ubiquitous and all-encompassing worlds."[64] The mode of futurist forensic practice that I have argued is present within the work of the NRO arguably functions as such a mode of "counter-navigation," opening up alternative and decolonial evidentiary modes of praxis that work against the "economy of legibility" that undergirds emergent media forensic epistemologies. In this article, I have aimed to articulate how the work of the NRO looks forwards and backwards simultaneously. The group looks backwards to excavate the deep entanglements between the forensic, evidentiary, and modes of Indigenous cosmo-epistemological thought. I have argued that the group's *Culture Capture* project aims to resuscitate the Indigenously-informed animistic core of the forensic. Here, forensic's "disavowed animism" is rejuvenated and recentered as a radical mode of praxis to resist the violent realities of contemporary settler colonialism and imagine alternative modes of evidentiary and documentary practice. Thus, to examine

Culture Capture as part of a widened conceptualization of the forensic is not only to acknowledge the power of a poetics within the forensic—able to forge material connections between diverse manifestations of settler-colonial power structures in ways that are speculative and iterative—it's also simultaneously to emphasize the need for a "forensics of multiplicity," reexamining how diverse experimental fora can offer new, *speculative* and *counter-hegemonic* forms of resistance that move beyond the conservative and techno-scientific origins of the forensic.

As I've suggested previously, such a mode of counter-hegemonic practice dovetails with other recent counter-epistemologies of the evidentiary: Lee's formulation of "documentary unreality," de Castro and Pugliese's work on "cosmo-epistemologies," and Ward's interventions around the concept of "Black evidence." Across these conceptual frameworks, there is a shared emphasis on how regimes of the forensic and evidentiary have historically been "tasked with filtering, indexing, and often *annihilating* subaltern lifeworlds."[65] Simultaneously however, these alternative, subversive, and counter-hegemonic approaches to the evidentiary expose a set of powerful, speculative and future-oriented modes of counter-forensic practice. For Ward, such counter-epistemological readings of the forensic and evidentiary can productively induce "anxieties and conceptual collisions when encountering terms like truth and objectivity."[66] When the ontological frameworks of truth and objectivity are always indelibly linked to the forensic and evidentiary's racist, colonial, and punitive pasts, it is crucial that modes of counter-practice break away from their visual and discursive groundings. Thus, by taking up the forensic and evidentiary, but reimagining them in speculative, counter-hegemonic ways, these frameworks can begin to be decoupled from their violent, settler-colonial origins.

Notes

1. For example, see Patrick Brian Smith and Ryan Watson, "Mediated Forensics and Militant Evidence: Rethinking the Camera as Weapon," *Media, Culture & Society* 45, no. 1 (2023): 36–56, https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221088954 <

https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221088954> ; Susan Schuppli, *Material Witness: Media, Forensics, Evidence* (MIT Press, 2020); Kelly Gates, "Media Evidence and Forensic Journalism," *Surveillance & Society* 18, no. 3 (2020): 403–8, https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v18i3.14090 < https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v18i3.14090> ; and Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (MIT Press, 2017). ↩

2. For example, see Thomas Keenan, "Counter-Forensics and Photography," *Grey Room* 55 (2014): 58–77, https://doi.org/10.1162/GREY_a_00141 < https://doi.org/10.1162/GREY_a_00141> ; Bea Abbott and Nick Lally, "Counter-Forensics and the Geographies of Images," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (2024): https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758241274646 < https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758241274646> ; and Jakob Hauter, "Forensic Conflict Studies: Making Sense of War in the Social Media Age," *Media, War & Conflict* 16, no. 2 (2023): 153–72, https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352211037325 < https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352211037325> . ↩

3. As Joseph Pugliese highlights, "Western forensic science was born in the charged context of empire, race, and colonialism," *Biopolitics of the More-Than-Human: Forensic Ecologies of Violence* (Duke University Press Books, 2020), 33. Contemporary understandings of the forensic and evidentiary are still structured around such violent hegemonic histories, particularly in contemporary legal punitive frameworks. My deployment of the counter-hegemonic here serves to highlight Indigenous epistemologies of the forensic that exist as a counterpoint to such Western hegemonic understandings, providing a radically alternative approach to evidence production and investigation. ↩

4. Pugliese, *Biopolitics of the More-Than-Human*. ↩

5. Patrick Brian Smith and Ryan Watson, "Mediated forensics and militant evidence: rethinking the camera as weapon," *Media, Culture & Society*, 45, no. 1 (2023): 36–56, https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221088954 < https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221088954> ; Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth* (Verso, 2021), 13. ↩

6. Allan Sekula, "Photography and the Limits of National Identity," *Grey Room* 55 (2014): 28–33, https://doi.org/10.1162/GREY_a_00143 < https://doi.org/10.1162/GREY_a_00143> . ↩

7. Keenan, "Counter-forensics and Photography," 69. ↩

8. Keenan, "Counter-forensics and Photography," 71. ↩

9. Patrick Brian Smith, "Elemental Documentary: Fire, Forensics and Pyro-Epistemologies," *Studies in World Cinema* 3, no. 1 (2023): 61–82, https://doi.org/10.1163/26659891-bja10025 < https://doi.org/10.1163/26659891-bja10025> . ↩

10. "About," Monument Lab, accessed January 7, 2025, https://monumentlab.com/about < https://monumentlab.com/about> . ↩

11. “National Monument Audit,” Monument Lab, accessed January 7, 2025, https://monumentlab.com/audit < https://monumentlab.com/audit> . ↩

12. “National Monument Audit.” ↩

13. “National Monument Audit.” ↩

14. “National Monument Audit.” ↩

15. Jeffrey C. Stone, “Imperialism, Colonialism and Cartography,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 13, no. 1 (1988), pp. 57–64 ↩

16. Nishat Awan, “Digital Witnessing and the Erasure of the Racialized Subject,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 20, no. 3 (2021): 507, https://doi.org/10.1177/14704129211061182 < https://doi.org/10.1177/14704129211061182> . ↩

17. Awan, “Digital Witnessing,” 507. ↩

18. Awan, “Digital Witnessing,” 512. ↩

19. Whilst the audit did inform the Mellon Foundation’s broader Monuments Project—a $250 million investment aimed at transforming how American “histories are told in public spaces and ensur{ing} that future generations inherit a commemorative landscape that venerates and reflects the vast, rich complexity of the American story”—such a community-based focus wasn’t built into the conception of the initial audit or interface (“National Monument Audit,” Monument Lab). Ultimately, the audit’s methodology relies heavily on data analysis and metadata parsing and the degree to which it engaged with local communities, historians, or cultural groups during its research phase is not evident. ↩

20. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 2020. ↩

21. James Frieze, *Theatrical Performance and the Forensic Turn* (Routledge, 2019), 10. ↩

22. Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (MIT Press, 2017), 17. ↩

23. Giampaolo Bianconi, Adam Khalil, Zack Khalil, and Jackson Polys, “New Red Order,” *Artforum*, October 8, 2020, https://www.artforum.com/interviews/new-red-order-on-channeling-complicity-toward-indigenous-futures-84189 < https://www.artforum.com/interviews/new-red-order-on-channeling-complicity-toward-indigenous-futures-84189> . ↩

24. Adam and Zack Khalil grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Both graduated from the Film and Electronic Arts program at Bard College and are currently based in Brooklyn, New York. The brothers have a long standing collaborative documentary practice, producing a range of short and feature length works that aim to critique the settler-colonial foundations of the documentary form through irony, humor, and institutional critique. Jackson Polys grew up in Ketchikan, Alaska. He received his BA in Art History and Visual Arts from Columbia University (2013), and holds an MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University (2015), he currently works between Alaska and New York. Working primarily across film and carved sculpture, his

practice explores the history, historiography, and contemporary experience of native peoples. ↩

25. Timur Si-Qin, Adam Khalil, Zack Khalil, and Jackson Polys, "Interview with New Red Order," *Living Content*, November 25, 2021, https://www.livingcontent.online/interviews/new-red-order < https://www.livingcontent.online/interviews/new-red-order> . ↩

26. Sin-Qin et al., "Interview," 2021. ↩

27. Adam Khalil, "UVP Insights: The New Red Order on Culture Capture: Terminal Addition," November 9, 2020, https://vimeo.com/477322168 < https://vimeo.com/477322168> . ↩

28. Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford University Press, 1999), 5. ↩

29. This results in a widespread state of uncertainty, where there is a paradoxical interplay between hiding and exposing information. In this context, the revealed "secret" is not truly concealed, as it is a public secret. The apparent secrecy is more of a deliberate deception, which, according to Taussig, is the foundation of a society's power. Paraphrased from Kenneth Surin, "The Sovereign Individual and Michael Taussig's Politics of Defacement," *Nepantla: Views from South* 2, no. 1 (2001): 206, muse.jhu.edu/article/23914 < https://muse.jhu.edu/article/23914> . ↩

30. Bianconi et al., "New Red Order." ↩

31. Khalil, "UVP Insights," my emphasis. ↩

32. Khalil, "UVP Insights." ↩

33. Khalil, "UVP Insights." ↩

34. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*. ↩

35. We will return to Pugliese's work on Indigenous animism and forensics in the latter part of this paper, reflecting upon the interconnections between such epistemologies and the counter-hegemonic forensic strategies developed by the NRO. ↩

36. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*. For other work in this area, see Gagan Preet Singh, "The Strange Science: Tracking and Detection in the Late Nineteenth-Century Punjab," in *Global Forensic Cultures: Making Fact and Justice in the Modern Era*, ed. Ian Burney and Christopher Hamlin (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 279–304, which explores the historical development of intricate and complex forensic footprint tracking by Indigenous Punjabis; Laurelyn Whitt, *Science, Colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples: The Cultural Politics of Law and Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), which examines how the scientific epistemologies of Indigenous peoples globally have been extracted through historical and contemporary processes of biocolonialism; and Michael Bennett, *Pathfinders: A History of Aboriginal Trackers in NSW* (NewSouth, 2020), which focuses on histories of Indigenous Aboriginal tracking methods. ↩

37. Noah Caspar, "New Red Order – Crimes Against Reality," {*art}seen*, January 2, 2021, https://artsatmichigan.umich.edu/seen/2021/01/02/review-new-red-order-crimes-against-reality/ < https://artsatmichigan.umich.edu/seen/2021/01/02/review-new-red-order-crimes-against-reality/> . ↩

38. Toby Lee, "The Radical Unreal: Fabulation and Fantasy in Speculative Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (2021): 9–18, https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.2021.74.4.9 < https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.2021.74.4.9> ; and LaCharles Ward, "Somebody's – Or Nothing: Visual Evidence, Blackness and the Limits of Legal Seeing," *History of Photography* 45, no. 3–4 (2021): 375, https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2022.2138166 < https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2022.2138166> . ↩

39. Lee, "Radical Unreal." ↩

40. Ward, "Somebody's," 375. ↩

41. It is important to note that whilst drawing upon—and engaging with—Indigenous theories and cultural practices, I acknowledge my own positionality as a non-Indigenous subject. Here, I take up Joseph Pugliese's important assertion that I must "respectfully mark the ethical and embodied circumscriptions that preclude me from the locus of Indigenous-Place Thought and its lived and generative matrix of stories, laws, and songs" (Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 27). ↩

42. Andrew Gumbel, "Junípero Serra's Brutal Story in Spotlight as Pope Prepares for Canonisation," *Guardian*, September 23, 2015, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/23/pope-francis-junipero-serra-sainthood-washington-california < https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/23/pope-francis-junipero-serra-sainthood-washington-california> . ↩

43. Indeed, as Adam Khalil has suggested, Fraser "was obsessed with Indians, he grew up in the prairies and had fond memories of playing with Lakota while his father was building railroads; expanding manifest destiny westward" (Adam Khalil, email to author, 2023). ↩

44. As I examined at the outset of the paper, the NRO's name is a reference to the IORM, an organization that was historically marked by a desire to simultaneously "eliminate the savage, but also to become the savage" (Sin-Qin et al., "Interview," 2021). This push and pull between settler-colonial desires for assimilation and destruction is a recurring theme that the NRO explore throughout their multimedia practice, particularly in video works such as *What Is Savage Philosophy? (Rhetorical Questions)*, 2018; *Never Settle: Calling In*, 2020; and *Never Settle: The Program*, 2018. ↩

45. In 2015, Fletcher appeared in an experimental adaptation of Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida," where he "dressed Indian." The NRO, rather than denouncing Fletcher, invited him for dinner and recruited him. The NRO wanted Fletcher, and other non-Indigenous accomplices, to function as Indigenous "proxies." As Jackson Polys suggests, "there's a tension between doing that and occluding or minimizing actual indigenous voices. But . . . we're trying to get away from the dynamic of people having to put in the labor of reproducing their own indigeneity." Thus, "accomplices" like Fletcher take on this work by "playing Indian." Adam Khalil, Zack

Khalil, and Jackson Polys, "The Film Comment Podcast: New Red Order," accessed August 1, 2022, https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/the-film-comment-podcast-new-red-order < https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/the-film-comment-podcast-new-red-order/> . ↩

46. Adam Khalil, "UVP Insights," 2019 ↩

47. Khalil, "UVP Insights." Moreover, when such acts of removal are enacted by white, non-Indigenous subjects, such acts might also constitute what Tuck and Yang have powerfully theorized as "settler moves to innocence." For them, a settler move to innocence is defined as "those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all." Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 10, https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.n38.04 < https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.n38.04> . ↩

48. Khalil, "UVP Insights." ↩

49. Khalil, "UVP Insights." ↩

50. The modes of "addition" and remodelling employed by the NRO can be nested within a longer lineage of Indigenous arts activism that has aimed to reshape settler-colonial modes of monumentalization and representation. Pan-Indigenous artists and activists have used a variety of aesthetic strategies (projected still and moving images and digital technologies, amongst others) to rework various settler-colonial regimes of monumentalization. For example, we can think here of the multimedia work of Cree artist Kent Monkman. Monkman's practice is concerned with reworking and queering nineteenth-century modes of settler-colonial visual mediation (from landscape painting to photographic portraiture). Here, the oppressive settler-colonial gaze is appropriated and subverted, both rupturing its coded conventions and reasserting Indigenous agency, histories, and futurities. The 2018 exhibition "Double Exposure" at the Seattle Art Museum is another example of such reframings and remodellings of the settler-colonial modes of visual mediation. Here, three Indigenous artists (Marianne Nicolson, a visual artist, scholar, activist and member of the Dzawada'enuxw First Nation of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations; Tracy Rector, a Choctaw/Seminole filmmaker, curator, and educator; and Will Wilson, a Diné cultural practitioner) subverted and reworked the (in)famous photographs of the white American artist Edward S. Curtis, where he documented the supposedly "vanishing" Native peoples of North America. The three artists, in ways comparable to the work of Monkman, take up this myth of "vanishing" to not only expose and disrupt such historical narratives, but also to reassert the resilience and strength of Indigenous peoples past and present. Thus, the NRO are part of a larger, intergenerational Indigenous movement that aims to morph and reshape settler representations of all kinds. ↩

51. Patrick Harrison, "New Red Order," *Millennium Film Journal* 70 (2019): 49. ↩

52. We might also read the economy of legibility that arguably structures the counter forensic through the lens of Anishinaabe writer and scholar Gerald Vizenor's concept of "terminal creeds." For Vizenor, terminal creeds are "beliefs which seek to fix, to impose static definitions on the world," which simultaneously suppress the emergence of radical counter-hegemonic Indigenous epistemologies. Louis Owens,

"Ecstatic Strategies: Gerald Vizenor's Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart," in *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 144. It is arguable that the economies of legibility that structure the counter forensic similarly fashion static definitions and modes of visuality that draw us back to the narrow apertures of state-sanctioned forensics. ↩

53. Christopher Green, "The New Red Order Promote Indigenous Futures," *Frieze*, 6 February 2020, https://www.frieze.com/article/new-red-order-promote-indigenous-futures < https://www.frieze.com/article/new-red-order-promote-indigenous-futures> . ↩

54. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 20. ↩

55. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 20; and Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Clear Light Publishers, 2016), 27. ↩

56. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 20; and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 56. It is important to note that de Castro's work on Indigenous animist thought is based primarily on his engagement with Indigenous communities in the Amazon. Of course, Indigenous communities are culturally diverse and do not have homogenous belief systems and ideologies. Whilst reading the relational dynamics of animistic thought across different Indigenous contexts runs the risk of "homogenising" or "essentialising" divergent Indigenous epistemologies (Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 17), it has been established that there are shared and intersecting understandings of the animistic across pan-Indigenous groups. Therefore, I contend that it is possible to read these diverse epistemological understandings of the animistic in a relational dialogue, whilst remaining attentive to their localized specificities and heterogeneities. For more on this see Amanda Kearney et al., "Conceptualising Indigenous Law," in *Indigenous Law and the Politics of Kincentricity and Orality*, ed. Amanda Kearney (Springer International Publishing, 2023), 1–30; and Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (Columbia University Press, 2005). ↩

57. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 21. ↩

58. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 20. ↩

59. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 20. ↩

60. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 20. ↩

61. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 19. ↩

62. Pugliese, *Biopolitics*, 8. ↩

63. Caspar, "New Red Order," 2021. ↩

64. Nishat Awan, "Digital Witnessing and the Erasure of the Racialized Subject," *Journal of Visual Culture* 20, no. 3 (2021): 512, https://doi.org/10.1177/14704129211061182 < https://doi.org/10.1177/14704129211061182> . ↩

65. Sasha Crawford-Holland and Patrick Brian Smith, "Forensics," in *The Lab Book: Situated Practices in Media Studies*, edited by Darren Wershler, Lori Emerson, and

Jussi Parikka (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022), https://manifold.umn.edu/read/a-glossary-of-lab-techniques-forensics/section/82b1f086-12fd-4f06-9e3c-cb6bea329291 < https://manifold.umn.edu/read/a-glossary-of-lab-techniques-forensics/section/82b1f086-12fd-4f06-9e3c-cb6bea329291> . ↩

66. Ward, "Somebody's," 374. ↩

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