

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide

a journal of nineteenth-century visual culture

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Káma-Kapúska! Making Marks in Indian Country, 1833–34

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide 18, no. 2 (Autumn 2019)

Citation: Kristine K. Ronan, with Allan McLeod, “Káma-Kapúska! Making Marks in Indian Country, 1833–34,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 2019), <https://doi.org/10.29411/ncaw.2019.18.2.23>.

Published by: [Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art](#)

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Abstract:

Over the winter of 1833–34, the Numak'aki (Mandan) war chief Mató-Tópe (ca. 1784–1837) visited the painting studio kept by Swiss painter Karl Bodmer (1809–93) at Fort Clark, a trading post in what is now North Dakota, fifty-five times. This project argues that this shared studio space and its activities are an extension of the Middle Ground, or the cultural arena co-created by Native and non-Native peoples on the French frontier. The Numak'aki name that local warriors bestowed upon Bodmer (Kapúska, or “Forcefully Makes Marks”) demonstrates this co-creation by describing the artist’s practices through a Numak'aki lens, rather than a Western one—a testimony to the co-operation of two distinct cultural systems within the Fort Clark studio. The project’s digital platform then models this argument in presenting the project’s related archives through both Native and non-Native frameworks.

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Káma-Kapúska! Making Marks in Indian Country, 1833–34 by Kristine K. Ronan

with Allan McLeod

Introduction

Over the winter of 1833–34, the Numak'aki (Mandan) war chief Mató-Tópe (ca. 1784–1837) visited the makeshift painting studio kept by Swiss painter Karl Bodmer (1809–93) at Fort Clark, a trading post in what is now North Dakota, a total of fifty-five times. These visits illustrate the multiple activities of Bodmer's studio over these snowbound months: hosting sitters, commissioning Native artists, and serving as a gallery where Native visitors viewed finished works and a workshop where local warriors completed their own projects. This project argues that Bodmer's shared studio space and its doings are an extension of the Middle Ground, or the cultural arena co-created by Native and non-Native peoples on the French frontier, as defined by historian Richard White. The Numak'aki name that local warriors bestowed upon Bodmer (Kapúska, or "Forcefully Makes Marks") demonstrates this co-creation by describing the artist's practices through a Numak'aki lens, rather than a Western one—a testimony to the co-operation of distinct cultural systems within the Fort Clark studio. Examining the portraits and exchanges of Mató-Tópe's activities in the Fort Clark studio through a framework of co-creation expands interpretations beyond the iconographic, ethnographic, and ideological readings that dominate previous art historical accounts.

This argument and application are modeled in the project's digital platform itself, which interweaves the project's archives of text and image in both linear (Western) and rhizomatic (non-Western) structures simultaneously. The scholarly essay of [Part 1](#) is supported by the textual descriptions of day-to-day life and exchanged objects as recorded by Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied ([Part 2](#)), a sample exhibition of what Mató-Tópe and others may have viewed when they visited the Fort Clark studio ([Part 3](#)), and a presentation of Numak'aki themes and persons ([Part 4](#)). The latter re-orders the evidence of Part 2 through Native concepts, practices, and historical figures.

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Scholarly Article

Making Marks in Indian Country in the 1830s

On November 9, 1833, the Numak'aki (Mandan) warrior and chief Mató-Tópe (Four Bears) visited the makeshift painting studio kept by painter Karl Bodmer at Fort Clark, a trading post located on the Missouri River in present-day North Dakota.^[1] He had arrived with a delegation of Native leaders, at least in part to see the portraits of Native men and women that Bodmer had brought with him. As Bodmer paged through his portfolio of watercolors, Mató-Tópe recognized several sitters. Two days later, on November 11, Mató-Tópe brought Péhriska-Rúhpa (Two Ravens), a neighboring Minitari (Hidatsa) village chief, to look over the portraits and admire the sitters that the two men knew.

So began Mató-Tópe's fifty-five visits to Bodmer's studio over the course of the winter of 1833–34.^[2] Bodmer was a Swiss watercolorist and printmaker who, along with his brother, had previously made a living selling bound travel albums of *vedute*, or landscape views, to tourists in the Koblenz region of the Rhine.^[3] Touring North America since July 1832, Bodmer, as well as his German patron Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied and Wied-Neuwied's hired hand David Dreidoppel, had gotten stuck at Fort Clark with the seasonal freeze of the Missouri River. Stranded, the three men set up shop in their sleeping quarters (fig. 1). They collected specimens and Native-crafted objects, recorded weather patterns, visited Native villages, and hosted Native elders and warriors while Bodmer carried out a portraiture project with the area's Native residents.

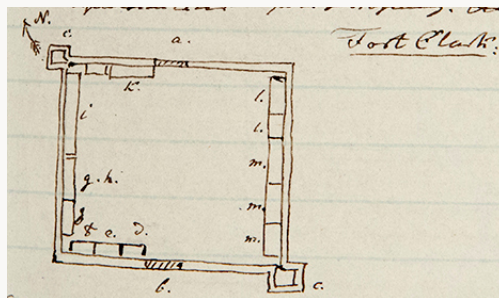


Fig. 1, Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied, Plan of Fort Clark, 1833–34. From *Manuscript Journal of Prince Maximilian's Travels in North America, parts 15–29, vol. 3, 1833–34*. Ink on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 511.NNG. Image in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

Wied-Neuwied left an extensive record of journal entries detailing these snow-bound months. Filled with details that reflect the scientific and travelogue interests of Wied-Neuwied—histories of people and places, language lists, temperature readings, sketches of scenes and dress, species names and measurements—these entries present the men's quarters as a shared space between the European party's own activities and those of their Native sitters. On the one hand, Bodmer ran a standard artist's studio, where he hosted sitters and housed his ever-growing portfolio. On the other, the newly constructed lodging also served as a workshop space for multiple artists' production, with Native warriors

stopping by to draw their own portraits, a commissioning house that sponsored Native artists and their work, and a gallery where Native village residents brought their friends and families to view finished works, as Mató-Tópe did in early November.

Surrounding all of this activity were patterns of exchange. Exchange was central to the artistic activities of the Fort Clark space, as likenesses, painted images, art supplies, and objects changed hands. But Wied-Neuwied's journal entries demonstrate a much larger pattern of exchange, one that also involved the sharing of knowledge, language, hospitality, customs, and food. In this essay, I argue that to understand Bodmer's artistic output, as well as that of his Native sitters, one must understand its embedded position within these larger surrounding patterns of exchange. Such behaviors were part and parcel of the North American region historically controlled by the French—what the French termed the *pays d'en haut*, or “upper country”—and what historians know as the Middle Ground.

The Concept of the Middle Ground

To argue that the Fort Clark artistic output was a product of the Middle Ground is to borrow from historians. The concept of the Middle Ground was first articulated by historian Richard White in his 1991 book *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*.^[4] White coined the term Middle Ground to name the co-created “single field of action” that he found in the geographic region of the French-controlled and administered *pays d'en haut* that extended over the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River, then south to the Ohio River.^[5] Neither the resident French nor Native peoples dominated or controlled the region. Instead, various actors developed and relied on a Middle Ground “in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the non-state world of [Native] villages” in order to form alliances as needed.^[6] The resulting system of trade was built on the shared field *between* cultural systems, one that was co-created by Native and non-Native peoples.

Co-creation grants agency to both Native and European players in the French fur trade.^[7] Both sets of players operated out of their own interests; both had to convince contingents of the other side to join with them in moments of political, social, or military struggle. To be successful, this convincing took on the linguistic and cultural languages of potential allies. New cultural practices and meanings arose out of “creative misunderstandings,” as groups misinterpreted the beliefs and customs of those they approached. These new practices and meanings became the co-created substratum of the Middle Ground.^[8]

The exchange of people, mores, customs, and things cemented these appeals and their built alliances. White lays out a complex array of *pays d'en haut* practices that would have involved the exchange of material culture.^[9] Native peoples received access to gunsmiths, blacksmiths, and missionaries, and they were regularly given presents and peace medals. French officers, trappers, and traders participated in calumet ceremonies, war feasts, “eat all” feasts, the giving of war belts, the accepting of the hatchet, war dances, the advancing of war bundles, and various ritual ceremonies, including those of mourning and covering the dead; some even sang their own war songs. These practices bound the many diverse populations of the *pays d'en haut* together, part of the conscious and visible framework by which peace, alliance, exchange, and free movement were achieved and maintained throughout French (and later British) North America.^[10]

Many practices of the *pays d'en haut* appear in Wied-Neuwied's *Tagebücher*, his daily logbooks of his two years of North American travels. These entries evidence the extension of the Middle Ground along the Missouri River, well into the nineteenth-century American expansionist period.^[11] Fur traders married Native women, adopted Native children, and maintained lodges in Native villages; forts housed and fed Native guests, regularly held gift-giving ceremonies, and were policed by rotations of Native warriors.^[12] All of these elements testify to two sides locked together in a relationship, as each group redefined their institutions and behaviors to accommodate the other. One of the tools for holding these relationships together was a ceremonial smoking pipe known to the French as the calumet.

Portraiture as Calumet

One way to understand portraiture at Fort Clark, and within the larger Middle Ground context, is through the calumet, an elaborately decorated and ceremonially powerful smoking pipe (fig. 2). On January 15, 1834, Mató-Tópe stopped by the Fort Clark room on his way to an adoption ceremony that was to be held at the nearby Numak'aki village of Nuptadi (Second Village). There, a “medicine son” would be adopted and “the medicine pipes” would be danced.



Fig. 2, Numak'aki, Calumet stem with feather fan, ca. 1780–1803. Wood, feathers, skin, hair, leather, quill, pigment, hide, and silk. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard College, Cambridge. Gift of the Heirs of David Kimball, 1899, 99-12-10/53100.2. Object in the public domain; image © President and Fellows of Harvard College. [\[larger image\]](#)

Adoption in the neighboring Awatíkihu (Five Villages) that surrounded Fort Clark happened through the calumet.^[13] Calumets were common among Missouri River peoples as a means to create the adoptive kin relationships needed for trade. A typical trade event lasted for days and could occur between hostile parties, as long as the calumet was invoked, to create a temporary connection:

Exchange events typically began with advance messengers giving notice to a host community that a group planned a trading visit. Following a period of preparation on both sides, the host community extended an invitation to enter the village and feasts were held, along with a council to fix prices. After several days the calumet ceremony itself was held, cementing a fictive kinship relationship between leading men of each

group, and by extensions [*sic*] their followers, both men and women. The event concluded with social dances, dancing for gifts, and gambling. Goods changed hands at each step of this complex process.[14]

As exceptionally effective tools for binding parties together, calumets later became a central feature of the *pays d'en haut* and the shared customs of the French fur trade.[15]

The specific shape and purpose of the January ceremony attended by Mató-Tópe is unknown, but the prevalence and continued use of the calumet in tribally specific ways is important, as it testifies to its continued power among various Native peoples to bind parties together across the nineteenth century. Prior to the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, for instance, what the Oglala Lakota know as *Hunka* wands were potentially still used for the “making relations ceremony” to bind the participating intertribal warriors together.[16]

Portraits of the frontier acted as metaphorical calumets. They bound their sitters and makers together within relational contexts that were flexible enough to retain their local meanings, even as they crossed cultural divides. Their exchange moved material objects into new hands. Portraits came with obligations—and they paved the way for other types of exchanges to take place.

Understanding the works of the Fort Clark studio as metaphorical calumets differs dramatically from previous interpretations of these works. Native American art history, modeled on formalist and iconographic methodologies, has focused on decoding the depicted material culture or framing a process of non-Native (Western-based) influence and change.[17] Top-down ethnographic and ideological readings have dominated American art history, which has often codified nineteenth-century portraits of Native peoples through their later inclusion in non-Native “Indian Galleries,” or large collections of portraits and Native-made objects displayed in museological, commercial, or state spaces.[18]

Yet the later migrations and uses of portraits on which much art historical analysis has been built are not equivalent to either the portraits’ moments of making or the exchanges and interrelationships in which they were born.[19] By focusing on spatially and temporally distant uses of Native portraits, dominant interpretations rehearse narratives of manifest destiny, often rendering their Native sitters without agency.[20] These readings have attended to issues of power, but they do not present a methodology attentive to the presence and complexities of Native historical thought, languages, persons, and cultures. Paying attention to the Middle Ground and its exchange patterns requires the development of a multilayered art historical approach, one large enough to encompass the various forms of mark making found in Indian country in the 1830s.

Practicing Art History on the Middle Ground

If one is to analyze the visual and material production of the Fort Clark studio, then, one has to practice an art history that accounts for the conditions and dynamics of the Middle Ground. This art historical practice must incorporate three distinct characteristics. Firstly, it must operate on the level of the *local*. [21] Middle Ground politics were negotiated not in empires’ distant and cosmopolitan official centers, but through the face-to-face interactions within its territories, specifically in its Native villages and non-Native trade forts. This means

that visual and material culture of the Middle Ground, even if imported from distant locales, was actively defined within local microcosms. A peace medal, for instance, might formally represent the US government through the classical symbols of an eagle, a shield, arrows, and an olive branch, but this historical visual coding of the power of the nation-state did not necessarily resonate with, or mean anything at all to, the medal's owners.[22] Instead, the giving of these medals performed local work.

Secondly, an art history of the Middle Ground is *relational*. Medals bound their givers and recipients. Gifting a medal created a temporary or fictive kinship between giver and receiver; it locked both parties into the terms and obligations of conditional friendship.[23] Such friendship was often expressed in familial terms: it was common among many Native communities to refer to fort, military, or government leaders as “Father” or “Grandfather” in formal address, as such names invoked the expected character, actions, and duties of a father or grandfather.[24] Fictive kinship was a widespread practice across Native North America, used to create temporary alliances across parties—even enemy ones—for purposes of trade, military action, or peace; only later were kinship practices adapted to the *pays d'en haut* and other post-contact situations.[25] A relational art history of the Middle Ground is attentive to these ways in which bound parties relied on exchange and gifting to express social expectations and obligations.

Finally, an art history of the Middle Ground is *culturally flexible*—it moves between the epistemologies and ontologies of its multiple peoples.[26] At least two distinct interpretive frames were operating at any given time, around any particular social practice, in the *pays d'en haut*. [27] A peace medal embodied diplomatic overtures from a centralized non-Native government but was used locally to bind Native and non-Native parties into mutual relationship and obligation. Native society dances at forts were both performances that non-Native audience members such as Wied-Neuwied might view and record in ethnographic terms, and the contractual expression of extended kinship and its duties. Yet co-creation and creative misunderstandings constantly blurred such stark distinctions between these parties and purposes: societies changed dance content for fort performances, rendering ethnographic readings incorrect, while fur traders who had married into Native families might themselves participate in village dances or rituals along literal, rather than temporary or fictive, kinship lines. An art history of the Middle Ground fluidly moves between multiple possibilities and positionalities.[28]

These three characteristics—local, relational, and culturally flexible—are illustrated by the name bestowed upon Bodmer by Máhchsi-Karéhde (Flying War Eagle), a young Numak'aki warrior.[29] After dark on a particularly cold evening, Máhchsi-Karéhde stood locked outside Fort Clark. He called to Bodmer from outside the gates, “Káma-Kapúska! Káma-Kapúska!” In response, the fort watchmen let him in. Máhchsi-Karéhde then proceeded to the Europeans' quarters and spent the night, likely on a pile of furs in front of the fire. He returned for his full-length portrait the next day (fig. 3).[30] On the one hand, the name that Máhchsi-Karéhde gave to Bodmer—Kapúska, or “Forcefully Makes Marks”—translated Bodmer's painting activities into local terms, notably verbs of action.[31] The use of *káma*, a term of endearment like “dear” or “friend,” was also relational, and Máhchsi-Karéhde seems to have called on the obligations of friendship—in this case, for shelter—in a form that both the

fort's guards and the Europeans recognized. In turn, Máhchsi-Karéhde seems to have acted on the mutuality of such obligations, as he sat for his portrait the next day.



Fig. 3, Karl Bodmer, *Máhchsi-Karéhde, Mandan Man*, 1834. Pencil on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.266. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

Both players were also culturally flexible, as they met the desires of the other—shelter, a portrait on paper—in the others' terms. This does not mean they acted out of selfless concern for or a deep understanding of the other: it is quite possible that Máhchsi-Karéhde was only thinking about surviving a night that had reached at least twenty degrees Fahrenheit below zero, and that Wied-Neuwied and Bodmer only let the young man into their quarters to be in a better position to add his portrait to their collection. In fact, portrait painting seems to have subsequently increased the social obligations of visits and gifts between the Europeans and each respective sitter, an aspect of the Middle Ground that Wied-Neuwied sometimes deeply resented.^[32] But all concerned were locked in complex relationships, as demonstrated by the giving of the name Káma-Kapúska, and an art-historical practice must be sensitive to this fact. In the second half of this article, I demonstrate what an art history of the Middle Ground looks like.

Case Study: Mató-Tópe and the Practice of Portraiture

Mató-Tópe serves as an excellent guide to the ways in which portraits could be actively co-created in the Middle Ground. Designated “second chief” in English, he was the war chief of Mít uta hako'sh (First Village), possessing the best military record in the village. Locally he would have been known as a *numakshí* (“man-to-be-good”), the phrase that marked all Numak'aki village leaders. To be a numakshí, Mató-Tópe was required to belong to at least one *óhate*, or society, and to hold the rights of a *ka-ka*, or knowledge keeper. As second chief, he likely sat on the larger council of the Awatikihu (Five Villages). And like all residents of the Awatikihu, Mató-Tópe was multilingual, able to speak the languages and dialects of the Numak'aki and Minitari peoples, as well as several languages of the villages' trading partners.^[33]

The status of these qualifications meant that Mató-Tópe was in a position to not only share knowledge and resources with newcomers, but to also determine what was and was not

shareable, and to enforce boundaries between insiders and outsiders. By examining the specific entries that concern this local leader in Wied-Neuwied's accounts (see Part 2), we can glimpse some of the claims and operative power dynamics potentially pursued by Native leaders in their sitting for, granting, giving, and circulating portraits—motivations that may have driven portrait making in the Middle Ground and across a range of geographies and contexts throughout the nineteenth century.

Fort Clark as a Workshop

Before anyone sat for a portrait in Bodmer's studio at Fort Clark, warriors arrived to the whitewashed single-room house built for the trio of Europeans in order to draw their own. [34] On November 13, 1833, Síh-Chidä (Be-Yellow Feather) came with a group of warriors to look at Bodmer's drawings and portraits. He then sat down at Bodmer's table, claimed a sheet of paper and colors as his own, and proceeded to draw portraits of Bodmer and Wied-Neuwied. [35] He came to draw again on the evening of the sixteenth, staying the night to finish the picture in the morning; Bodmer then gave the young man supplies, and Síh-Chidä returned with more drawings on the eighteenth. [36] It was only on December 5 that the Europeans convinced Síh-Chidä to sit for a portrait (fig. 4); the warrior then stayed through the afternoon to complete another set of portraits of Wied-Neuwied and Bodmer. [37]



Fig. 4, Karl Bodmer, *Sih-Chidä, Mandan Man*, 1833. Watercolor on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.267. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

Likewise, Mató-Tópe completed several drawings himself before sitting for a single portrait. On November 24, Wied-Neuwied and Bodmer gave supplies to Mató-Tópe, who returned with a drawing of war deeds a week later (fig. 5). Mató-Tópe stayed to watch Bodmer at work through the rest of the morning. He returned again on December 8 and 10 to watch Bodmer work. He finally sat for a portrait on January 17 (fig. 6), then drew another drawing of war deeds for Wied-Neuwied on February 26 and 27 (fig. 7).



Fig. 5, Mató-Tópe, *Untitled (Battle with a Cheyenne Chief)*, 1833. Watercolor and pencil on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.384. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 6, Karl Bodmer, *Mató-Tópe, Mandan Chief*, 1834. Watercolor on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.260. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 7, Mató-Tópe, *Untitled (Self-Portrait, Holding Feather-Covered Shield with Pair of Ceremonial Lances Thrust into Ground)*, 1834. Watercolor and pencil on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.384. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

What is clear from these dates is the movement between roles for a number of warriors, between being the sitter and being the mark maker. And while past interpretations have read a unidirectional non-Native artistic influence on the Native work from the Fort Clark studio, the workshop ingenuity of the warriors may have been inspired by each other, or from their gazes at their peer sitters in Bodmer's works.^[38] Take, for instance, the second war deed drawing of Mató-Tópe (see fig. 7). Mató-Tópe portrays himself with the lances of two societies in which he was a member. To be a keeper of the lance often meant that one had leadership roles within the society, and Mató-Tópe seems to have performed this role when he led the Society of the Half-Shorn Heads into the plaza of Fort Clark for a dance on the third of April. Did Mató-Tópe include his lances in his drawing because he was moving toward realism, as past scholars have claimed? Or was he instead using Native visual languages and modeling his self-depiction on the earlier portrait of Pitätapiú, an Assiniboin warrior who posed with the lance of his warrior society, as well as his personal shield and medicine (fig. 8)?^[39]



Fig. 8, Karl Bodmer, *Pitätapiú, Assiniboin Man*, 1833. Watercolor and pencil on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.254. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

The war deed drawing displays the co-creation processes at work in the Fort Clark studio. While the media of paper and watercolor they used were Western artistic tools, the mark making spoke the local Plains visual language of battle honors and rights. Depictions of the self were not made for the purpose of capturing likeness but rather for recording a lifetime of deeds and events. For example, warriors recorded their coup counts, or battle honor marks, through formulaic schemes of representation that were painted onto clothing or hides. The coup marks belonging to Red White Buffalo, for instance, record a number of Numak'aki—specific warrior marks for horse raids and war parties, tallying heroic deeds such as capturing horses and killing enemies (fig. 9). Such deeds, accumulated over time, then qualified one for leadership. If Bodmer went about creating likenesses, then, so too did Mató-Tópe and Pitätapiú, through their displays of the material culture objects associated with their leadership, a means of making claims for their previous warrior deeds and personal qualities of strength, *ho'pini* (loosely translated as “medicine”), and bravery on the battlefield. Workshop experimentation and its aftereffects should be understood in relation to the patterns, rules, and purposes of this long-established local visual vocabulary.

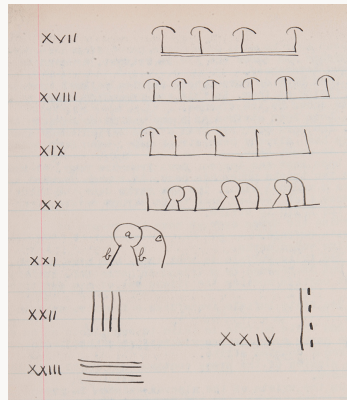


Fig. 9, Counting coup marks owned and drawn by Red White Buffalo (Numak'aki) in 1884, explained by Beaver (Numak'aki) and Butterfly (Minitari) and copied by Gilbert L. Wilson in 1909. From volume 8 (1909) of the Hidatsa-Mandan Reports, Gilbert L. and Frederick N. Wilson Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul. Notes in the public domain; image courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society and the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History. [\[larger image\]](#)

Fort Clark as a Commissioning House

Mixed in with the list of workshop projects at Fort Clark were object commissions issued by Wied-Neuwied. On November 24, 1833, Wied-Neuwied asked Mató-Tópe to finish a bear claw necklace for him, providing additional elements purchased from the fort store (fig. 10).^[40] Mató-Tópe returned the completed item on January 8, 1834. A week later, Wied-Neuwied commissioned Mató-Tópe to make duplicates of his carved hair sticks (fig. 11). Commissions may have been a standard practice between fur traders and Native artisans, as Bodmer had visited Síh-Chidä and Mató-Tópe in Mít uta hako'sh in late December and found the latter painting a hide robe for Michel Bellehumeur, an Ojibwe interpreter stationed at Fort Clark.^[41] And like the workshop alterations between warrior drawings and sittings for Bodmer's executed portraits, commissioning went in both directions: in early March, Mató-Tópe requested a drawing of an eagle from Wied-Neuwied.



Fig. 10, Mató-Tópe, Bear claw necklace, 1833. Hide, blue glass beads, red pigment, and bear claws. Linden-Museum, Stuttgart. Object in the public domain; photo: A. Dreyer; image courtesy of Linden-Museum Stuttgart. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 11, Mató-Tópe, Seven wooden coup symbol replicas, 1833. Carved wood and pigments. Linden-Museum, Stuttgart. Objects in the public domain; photo: A. Dreyer; image courtesy of Linden-Museum Stuttgart. [\[larger image\]](#)

Commissions like these tested Middle Ground participants; they demonstrated whether or not a given participant knew the expectations and obligations that came with their Middle Ground involvement. As Wied-Neuwied records in his first entry describing Mató-Tópe, the painter George Catlin had been a poor gift giver in the required exchange for a painted robe. When Mató-Tópe returned Catlin's paltry proffered items, saying he would instead gift the robe to Catlin, he was refusing to entertain Catlin on the Middle Ground: gifting on the part of Mató-Tópe meant that no exchange occurred and that the related kinship obligations were therefore not initiated. Such failures in the required exchange customs of the Middle Ground could have a profound impact on one's subsequent reputation. One evening at Fort Clark, Charbonneau, an independent fur trader and translator who resided in Amatihá (Fourth Village), related stories of Duke Paul Wilhelm of Würtemberg, a European visitor to the Missouri River region in the 1820s, using similarly stingy terms, as "he accepted sugar and coffee and did not give anything in return."^[42] Wied-Neuwied wrote that Würtemberg had a bad reputation "here and there" along the Missouri as a result.

Like the portraits produced at Fort Clark, commissions were both expressions and products of Middle Ground relationships. This means that an exchanged object's significance is not only in the material thing exchanged, but also in the behaviors of exchange that surrounded it. Prior to being asked to complete the bear claw necklace, Mató-Tópe spent the night in front of the Europeans' fire. Such visits often produced knowledge for Wied-Neuwied's notebooks, but they also involved tobacco, food, and a bed for guests.[43] Sometimes visitors brought specimens for Wied-Neuwied's collections. While Wied-Neuwied's surviving collections of objects and recorded knowledge are usually understood in ethnographic terms, their work and significance in Indian country included their creation and enforcement of Middle Ground fictive kin relationships and obligations.

In this way, the whitewashed room at Fort Clark came to mimic the open doors expected of Native leaders in the villages. Numak'aki peoples knew a village leader as a numakshí ("man-to-be-good") or *miti ko-mne-ka* ("one who is the village door"). Leaders were expected to be generous, playing host at any time, with food always at the ready. This hospitality was extended to Bodmer at the Numak'aki earth lodge of Dipäuch (Broken Marrow), where Bodmer constructed a complex sketch of the lodge interior over the course of the winter (fig. 12).[44] Pots of food are visible by the central firepit, as are the women kin of Dipäuch who were responsible for meal preparation. By the spring of 1834, when food was running desperately short, Mató-Tópe and Péhriska-Rúhpa extended their roles as village leaders and providers to the residents of Fort Clark, gifting meat to the emaciated Europeans.[45] Bodmer and Wied-Neuwied mirrored the role of the numakshí as they worked at Fort Clark, hosting and feeding their many visitors in a demonstration of their facility with the proffered terms of the Middle Ground.



Fig. 12, Karl Bodmer, *Interior of a Mandan Earth Lodge*, 1833–34. Watercolor and ink on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.261.A. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

Fort Clark as a Gallery

It was only a day after the Europeans had arrived at Fort Clark and settled into their quarters that Mató-Tópe and a delegation of other Native leaders arrived to look at Bodmer's portfolio of portraits, as discussed at the outset of this essay. As recorded by Wied-Neuwied, Mató-Tópe "recognized several of [the sitters]." Mató-Tópe and Péhriska-Rúhpa then arrived two days later and again spent time viewing Bodmer's extraordinarily detailed works.

It is important to unpack Mató-Tópe's act of recognizing portrait sitters, long before the paintings left Indian country, because such recognition did not necessarily occur through Bodmer's skilled hand at Western-style mimesis. The portrait of Kiäsax, for instance, featured a familiar resident of the Awatikihu (fig. 13). A Pikuni (Piegan) warrior, he had married a Minitari woman, and the couple lived in the Third, Fourth, or Fifth Village. Bodmer had painted Kiäsax aboard their steamer while headed northward to Fort Union in June 1833 (the summer before the Europeans were stranded at Fort Clark on their return south), and Kiäsax seems to have responded to the session by gathering plants for Wied-Neuwied's botanical collections.[46]



Fig. 13, Karl Bodmer, *Kiäsax, Piegan Blackfeet Man*, 1833. Watercolor on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.395. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

Later, in the close quarters at Fort Clark, Mató-Tópe's recognition of Kiäsax would have come through likeness, yes, but also through various material culture elements evident in the portrait. Native viewers would have recognized the metal cross and Diné (Navajo) First Phase chief's blanket as trade items from distant locales. They also would have recognized that the young man had taken on the Minitari practice of dividing his long hair into multiple clay-smeared twists that were then gathered in the back, a tribally specific outward sign that, in the case of Kiäsax, would have potentially declared his military allegiance to his adopted kin and tribe.

Likeness-as-mimesis has been given extraordinary power in contemporaneous sources on 1830s portraiture in Indian country, whether in accounts of the stylistic change among Plains artists after Bodmer's visit, the advertising language Wied-Neuwied employed once back in Europe to describe Bodmer's work, or the letters home from George Catlin, who claimed for himself a great "magic" through his ability to capture his Native sitters' likenesses.[47] These interpretations all rely on a Western notion of likeness-as-mimesis: the closer in likeness that a portrait is, the more skilled the artist and the more admired the work. Yet Native recognition of the "magic" in Indian country portraits did not come through an artist's ability to convey likeness but through the subject's *presence-in-absence*. [48] In Native cultures, to be in the presence of an object made by Grandfather is to be in the presence of

Grandfather himself.[49] Through presence-in-absence, an object *becomes* the associated person, extending the referenced person across space and time.[50]

A host of Native practices operated within this framework. The sacred bundle histories kept by various Plains tribes, for instance, were bundles of presence-in-absence, whereby each contained element—a bone, a feather, a skull, and so on—served as the trace of the person, past or present, who had contributed that element.[51] When a ka-ka, or keeper, narrated a bundle in their keeping, they then recounted each of these persons and the connected moment that had motivated the contribution; when they prayed to the bundle, they spoke to all those connected with it, asking them to intervene or act.[52] Each element of the bundle became a *presence*, even in the original contributor’s *absence*, and that presence was believed to hold the power to act. Such presence-in-absence was carried by the physical traces or remainders of the referenced person.

A portrait for which an individual sat could carry these traces and their presence-in-absence as much as the bundles and Native-made objects they may have made in their lifetime. When Mató-Tópe, Péhriska-Rúhpa, and other Native leaders crowded into the Fort Clark quarters in early November 1833, then, it is entirely possible that the men thought of Bodmer’s array of portraits along the lines of a bundle—not one that held spiritual significance or tribal histories, the way local ones did, but one that carried the presence-in-absence of warriors like Kiásax to other Native villages and fur trade forts as the Europeans traveled, eventually taking them “to Europe.”[53] Such a notion would not value a portrait along the lines of mimetic likeness, but on whether or not the portrait effectively carried their trace, their presence-in-absence, across both space and time. For Awatíkihu warriors in particular, the notion of sending one’s presence-in-absence to distant locales overlapped with local ideas of leadership and rights, as detailed in the next section. These ideas suggest that sitters in Bodmer’s studio used Western-style portraiture as a means for mobile political claims on their own behalf—a major motivation for pursuing the artistic co-creation of portraiture.

Fort Clark as a Studio

While Bodmer’s work is most often associated with the traditional work of an artist’s studio, the other functions of the Fort Clark space—workshop, commissioning house, and gallery—all occurred first; it took nearly a month before warriors began to arrive at the Europeans’ room to sit for their portraits.[54] Sitters decided on their own dress and appearance; there is no evidence that either Wied-Neuwied or Bodmer interfered with sitters’ decisions on how to appear for their portraits at Fort Clark. The Middle Ground contexts of the forts could produce visible cross-cultural elements, which in turn reinforced fort and tribe or band contracts and relationships: *soldats* (soldiers, or Native men hired as rotating fort police), for instance, donned non-Native hats or jackets, and chiefs wore peace medals over hide shirts.[55] Fort Clark sitters, however, wore nearly all Native dress for their various portraits.

The sitters’ choice of dress is important because it illustrates the co-creative forces operating within the portraits from Fort Clark.[56] Such choices often visually retold one’s coup counts. Plains warriors orally repeated these coup counts at public performances and private society gatherings and rituals. It is clear from various accounts that Mató-Tópe delivered oral narrations of his coups to non-Native visitors at Fort Clark; Wied-Neuwied recorded a

version in his very first description of the man on November 9.^[57] Mató-Tópe also visualized these accounts using Native mark-making practices on his own as well as in commissioned hide paintings.

Portions of these coup counts were then repeated when Mató-Tópe sat for his half and full portraits (see fig. 6, fig. 14). In both he wears a carved and painted wooden knife, a symbol of the blade that Mató-Tópe had been brave enough to grab barehanded in his duel with a Tsitsistas (Cheyenne) chief (see fig. 11). Visible in the half portrait are the six carved and painted coup sticks that Wied-Neuwied asked Mató-Tópe to copy (see fig. 11). Such wooden coup sticks appear in the specific depictions of Numak'aki warriors in Plains winter counts, and may have been one of the ways that enemies of the Awatíkihu identified Numak'aki warriors on the battlefield (fig. 15).



Fig. 14, Karl Bodmer, *Mató-Tópe, Mandan Chief*, 1834. Watercolor on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.383. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

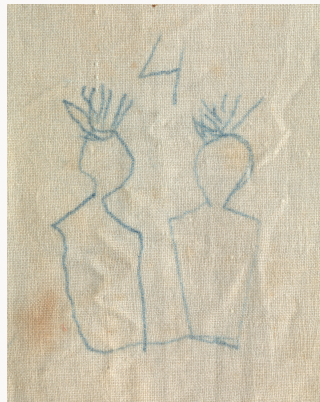


Fig. 15, Detail of year 1789–90 from the Boide (Flame) Oohenonpa Lakota (Two Kettles Lakota) winter count, as copied by Septima V. Koehler, ca. 1900. Ink on muslin. National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington (24.4039). Object in the public domain; photo: NMAI Photo Services; image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian. [\[larger image\]](#)

Within a Plains tribe, coup marks defined a warrior. In a 1911 interview, for instance, Minitari warriors Tseca Matseísi and Butterfly accounted for each member of their Mi'maúpaki (Stone Hammer) society cohort through their accumulated coup marks of kills, wounds, strikes, and horses shot in battle, while the two men struggled to answer their interrogator's questions about their friends' exact ages.[58] In the tightly woven social structures of Awatikihu villages, as previously discussed, a warrior was known by his deeds, and these deeds were in turn the claims he must have to be a leader, such as village war chief or society leader—both of which were positions that Mató-Tópe held at the time of the Europeans' visit.[59] But among the Numak'aki, only a warrior had the right to his coup marks, in either visual or oral form.[60] One had to do one's own telling.

Sitting for a portrait, then, was a way of duplicating one's honors through the hand of a *kapúska*, a habitual mark maker, who would carry and tell of those deeds far beyond the village plaza. This use of portraits on the part of Native participants reflects the co-creation involved in the genre itself, whereby sitters actively affect their artistic portrayal.[61] To think of a Native warrior or leader posing within a co-creative process casts him as an agent, one who “*gets himself portrayed*”; he participates in what, for him, is an act of self-portrayal, or self-presentation, or self-representation. To pose is by definition to portray oneself.”[62]

For a leader like Mató-Tópe, portraits continuously declared his deeds as they traveled, making and remaking his claims for leadership not only within the Awatikihu, but to those trading partners, enemy peoples, and non-Native institutional representatives who might come upon Mató-Tópe's presence-in-absence in the decades to come. Portraits counted coup. In this way, portraiture of the Middle Ground fulfilled local requirements and understandings of leadership.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have put forward the notion that portraits made within Middle Ground spaces have to be understood as co-created products of Middle Ground relations. This notion relies on the presence of multiple cultural frameworks in the interpretations and uses of such portraits. I have worked to demonstrate such a presence through an art historical practice that is local, relational, and culturally flexible. The resulting case study reveals the ways in which local Native residents brought their own specific visual languages and cultural practices to the Fort Clark studio over the winter of 1833–34. Shared cultural behaviors, such as the obligations of fictive kinship, also emerge as important influences on the processes of portrait painting, commissioned object making, and exchange.

Middle Grounds such as that found at Fort Clark in the early 1830s proved to be quite fragile in the face of US expansionist processes of the nineteenth century. To return to my metaphor of portraiture as calumet, it is important to note that even as calumets retained their power to bind parties across Middle Ground spaces in the first half of the nineteenth century, the young American republic began to call on this influence and its symbology for their own purposes. The reverse of the Jefferson peace medal, for instance, included a pipe stem crossed with a hatchet above a pair of hands entangled in a handshake (fig. 16). The represented pipe was a pared down reference to the calumet—a confusion of the elaborate

calumet stem (see fig. 2) with those of everyday pipes and their often shared act of smoking. By the end of the nineteenth century, these simplified pipes were the “peace pipe” trope of literature and film—one that ran parallel to the continued use of calumets and their various ceremonies among Native communities.



Fig. 16, John Reich (designer) and Robert Scot (engraver), Jefferson Peace Medal, verso, 1801. Embossed silver. American Numismatic Society, New York. Medal in the public domain; image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society. [\[larger image\]](#)

The roots of this stark diversion of the calumet into parallel uses and meanings among Native and non-Native peoples can be seen among American Fur Company (AFC) documents of the 1830s. The AFC institutionally hosted the Europeans’ two-year tour of North America, and Wied-Neuwied collected a “certificate of good behavior” while at the AFC outpost of Fort McKenzie that depicted an elaborate calumet in the bottom left corner (fig. 17).^[63] AFC trader Kenneth McKenzie had recently been using the certificates to reward Native leaders and warriors who showed loyalty to his fur trade posts. The seeds of the patriarchal relationship that developed between the US “father” government and those the government viewed as dependent and accommodating Native “children” by the end of the nineteenth century are apparent on McKenzie’s certificate, as the European in top hat exhorts his Native compatriot to “offer [the white man] food and conduct him on his road” in order to “always find friends in your time of need.” Such language requests Native resources with only a vague promise of friendship in return, a radical distortion of the mutual bindings and exchanges that constituted the Middle Ground.



Fig. 17, Jean Baptiste Moncravie, *Certificate of Good Behavior*, 1833. Watercolor and ink on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.461. Certificate in public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

Yet Wied-Neuwied also collected an oral account of the contract between Fort McKenzie and the local tribes. Narrated verbally through a ka-ka of the Siksika, Pikuni, or Kainah (Blood) tribes, the oral treaty invokes “a firm and lasting peace” that will be testified to when the involved parties meet and “smoke the calumet in friendship and security.”^[64] The treaty was sealed when the present Native leaders assented that it had “conform[ed] to all ancient customs and ceremonies, etc.” and had “observ[ed] the due mystical signs enjoined by the Grand Medicine Lodges.”^[65] In this remembering of what bound fort and Native peoples together, the calumet retained local and relational meanings, even as it joined players across vast differences.

Like calumets, portraits—like those created at Fort Clark—could later be employed within colonial projects that perverted their original meanings. As such objects traveled to distant locales, the potential disconnect from their original intents, purposes, and contexts allowed various agents to rewrite these objects’ associated meanings and shared uses and obligations.^[66] These rewrites still shape today’s scholarship with regard to Native material cultures and histories.^[67] An art history of the Middle Ground works to bring the original local, relational, and culturally flexible contexts of such material culture to the fore, challenging our inherited mythologies as we continue to move and write toward a decolonized future.

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in American Art, a Terra Summer Residency Fellowship, a CIC/Smithsonian Institution Predoctoral Fellowship based at the National Museum of the American Indian, and multiple fellowships and grants from the Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan.

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Notes

[1] For consistency, this article names individuals with the terminology and contemporary linguistic counterparts published by the Joslyn Museum of Art (hereafter JAM); see sources in fn2. If not part of a formal image title, tribal self-identifications use their own language, with the English equivalent adjacent in parentheses. Numak'aki phrases and translations come from the author's own language work, with English translations in parentheses; see Sources/Part 4.

[2] Descriptions of historical events are based on the published translations of the journals of Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied, *The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied*, vols. 1–3, ed. Stephen S. Witte and Marsha V. Gallagher (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press with JAM, 2008–12). Specific entries will henceforth be given as: Date (JAM volume:page). Except for the occasional inclusion of dates on previously undated works, image captions match those given in Marsha V. Gallagher and David C. Hunt, eds., *Karl Bodmer's America* (Omaha: JAM and University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

[3] On Bodmer's early training and work, see William J. Orr, "Karl Bodmer: The Artist's Life," in Gallagher and Hunt, *Karl Bodmer's America*, 351.

[4] Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (1991; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[5] White, *The Middle Ground*, 68.

[6] White, *The Middle Ground*, x.

[7] In the early 1990s, this aspect of granting agency to Native historical players set off a series of debates around the work of White and other New Western historians; for one sharp period critique, see Daniel J. Herman, *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 279–91. For a description of White's *The Middle Ground* as the foundation for the New Native History that has followed, see Ned Blackhawk, "Look How Far We've Come: How American Indian History Changed the Study of American History in the 1990s," *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 6 (November 2005): 13–17.

[8] White, *The Middle Ground*, x.

[9] See White, *The Middle Ground*, chapter 3.

[10] For the subsequent British adoption of Middle Ground practices, see White, *The Middle Ground*, 248, 372–73; and Fintan O'Toole, *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (New York: Farar and Farar, 2005).

[11] This extension matches the work of other historians who have found that localized regions with no single dominant trade group could retain Middle Ground dynamics as late as the 1860s. See Jay Gitlin's articles "Old Wine in New Bottles: French Merchants and the Emergency of the American Midwest, 1795–1835," *Proceedings of the 13th and 14th Meetings of the French Colonial Historical Society* 13/14 (1990): 35–57; "On the Boundaries of Empire: Connecting the West to Its Imperial Past," in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, ed. William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin (New York: WW Norton, 1991), 71–89; and "Empires of Trade, Hinterlands of Settlement," in *Oxford History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 79–114; as well as histories of Bent's Fort in southeastern Colorado described in Herman, *Romance on the Middle Ground*, 289–91.

[12] These Middle Ground patterns in multiple locations across North America created French *métis* cultures over many generations. James Kipp, the American Fur Company (AFC) trader who ran Fort Clark during the Europeans' visit, was married to a local Numak'aki woman and had adopted a son. It was through these relationships that Kipp then extended various invitations to the Europeans during their stay. Kipp's integration into local Native life should not be taken as the norm across the frontier or the AFC, however, as Wied-Neuwied's notes

make clear that forts in this period reflected the personalities of the men who ran them, and others in leadership positions were not as attuned or integrated as Kipp.

[13] In the early twentieth century, Awatikihu residents could still describe and create an adoption robe and its depiction of calumets; see the robe made by Good Voice (Minitari) for anthropologist Gilbert L. Wilson in 1911 (now no. 50.1/6021 at the American Museum of Natural History, New York); Volume 10 (1911), Hidatsa-Mandan Reports, Gilbert L. and Frederick

N. Wilson Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota (hereafter MHS-Wilson).

[14] Donald J. Blakeslee, “The Plains Interband Trade System: An Ethnohistoric and Archaeological Investigation” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1975), cited in Mark Mitchell, *Crafting History in the Northern Plains: A Political Economy of the Heart River Region, 1400–1750* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), 89.

[15] White, *The Middle Ground*, chapter 1.

[16] As seen on a painted robe at the National Museum of the American Indian (no. 20/5176), Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

[17] The former approach is exemplified by the work of Marsha V. Gallagher, former curator at JAM; for the latter, the classic text is John C. Ewers, “Early White Influence upon Plains Indian Painting: George Catlin and Karl Bodmer among the Mandans, 1832–34” (1957) in John C. Ewers, *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri* (1968; repr. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 98–109. See also W. Raymond Wood, Joseph C. Porter, and David C. Hunt, *Karl Bodmer’s Studio Art: The Newberry Library Bodmer Collection* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

[18] See Stephanie Pratt, *American Indians in British Art, 1700–1840* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005); William H. Truettner, ed., *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), and Truettner, *Painting Indians and Building Empires in North America, 1710–1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). State galleries were found in St. Louis (the office of William Clark), Monticello (the home of Thomas Jefferson), and the War Department, while museological displays included Peale’s Museum (Philadelphia), the Louvre (Paris), and the Smithsonian Institution (Washington). George Catlin’s touring collections and those amassed in later photography studios operated commercially.

[19] For a later case study that also addresses these false equivalencies, see Frank H. Goodyear III, *Red Cloud: Photographs of a Lakota Chief* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

[20] See Elizabeth Hutchinson’s critique of this scholarship in “From Pantheon to Indian Gallery: Art and Sovereignty on the Early Nineteenth-Century Cultural Frontier,” *Journal of American Studies* 47, no. 2 (May 2013): 313–37.

[21] Jolene Rickard has been the best at articulating this local level to art historical interpretation in indigenous contexts; see “Indigenous and Iroquoian Art as Knowledge: In the Shadow of the Eagle” (PhD diss., SUNY Buffalo, 1996); and “Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (2011): 465–86.

[22] See examples in Cécile R. Ganteaume, *Officially Indian: Symbols that Define the United States* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian NMAI, 2017), 64–67.

[23] White, *The Middle Ground*, 98.

[24] Numak’aki peoples, for instance, knew the US president as *ma’at-his*, “the Old Father,” or Grandfather; see Robert Charles Hollow Jr., “A Mandan Dictionary” (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 1970), 60–61.

[25] White suggests that prior to the *pays d’en haut* a Middle Ground likely developed between Iroquoian and Huron peoples; White, *The Middle Ground*, x. See also calumet.

[26] I use the plural “peoples” throughout this essay to remind readers that common frontier identification labels often contained multiple entities. As seen in the Awatikihu, even the tribal designation Numak’aki was an umbrella category over smaller, culturally distinct groupings.

[27] For another “integrationist approach” to “enmeshed” frontier practices and objects, see Scott Stevens, “Cultural Mediations: Or How to Listen to Lewis and Clark’s Indian Artifacts,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 31, no. 3 (2007): 181–202.

[28] This fluidity is particularly important in casting aside art history’s inheritance from anthropology, which set up false notions of a frozen tribal cultural “purity” as a main category of analysis; see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[29] January 11, 1834 (JAM 3:239).

[30] January 12, 1834 (JAM 3:240).

- [31] Literally, the inhabitation (the suffix *-ka*) of his forceful, mark-making craft (*kapús*).
- [32] January 11, 1834 (JAM 3:239).
- [33] As late as 1908, Good-Is-His-Way noted that translators were not needed between Numak'aki and Minitari peoples; Volume 7 (1908), MHS-Wilson. For other languages spoken by Mató-Tópe, see December 11 and 24.
- [34] November 21 and 22, 1833 (JAM 3:71–72).
- [35] November 13, 1833 (JAM 3:59).
- [36] November 17–18, 1833 (JAM 3:65–67).
- [37] December 5, 1833 (JAM 3:94–95). While this discussion focuses on portraits, many Native warriors came to the studio to work on their dress; see Sih-Chidá's visit on December 27, 1833 (JAM 3:110), as well as Mató-Tópe's visits on January 15, January 17, and January 22.
- [38] Arni Brownstone, "European Influence in the Mandan-Hidatsa Graphic Works Collected by Prince Maximilian of Wied," *American Indian Art Magazine*, Summer 2014, 58–70; Ewers, "Early White Influence"; and Ron McCoy, "Of Forests and Trees: John C. Ewers's 'Early White Influence upon Plains Indian Painting' Re-Examined," *American Indian Art Magazine*, Winter 2001, 62–71.
- [39] June 29 and 30, 1833 (JAM 2:240–41, 243, 245).
- [40] Reproduced ledger (JAM 3:75).
- [41] November 8, 1833 (JAM 3:53).
- [42] November 17, 1833 (JAM 3:66).
- [43] See December 11, December 24, and February 22.
- [44] February 1–2, 1834 (JAM 3:248–49); April 13, 1834 (JAM 3:281).
- [45] See March 15, March 20, and March 21.
- [46] June 23, 1833 (JAM 3:218–19).
- [47] See, respectively, Ewers, "Early White Influence"; Maximilian Wied Neu-Wied [*sic*] to H. E. Lloyd (February 7, 1841), transcription, NEW-Ayer MS 3215, Newberry Library, Chicago, IL; and George Catlin, Letter 15, *Letters and Notes*, repr. in Sarah Burns and John Davis, eds., *American Art to 1900: A Documentary History* (Berkeley: University of California, 2009), 445.
- [48] Through the term presence-in-absence, I suggest an overlap with what Renaissance art theorist Leon Battista Alberti called the quasi-divine "presence in absence" of portraiture, as discussed in Jennifer Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 33. My reference to "magic" borrows from the "indexical magic" of portraits discussed in Wendy Steiner, "The Semiotics of a Genre: Portraiture in Literature and Painting," *Semiotica* 21, nos. 1/2 (1977): 111–19, which provides the basis for my co-operative cross-cultural set of interpretations around portraiture.
- [49] See, for instance, Jeffrey Gibson, "one becomes the other" (2015), accessed September 15, 2019, <https://jeffreygibson.net/video--/1>.
- [50] This might be labeled "index-as-trace-as-person," in that the indexical traces left by a sitter or object maker are equivalent to that maker's being. See Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), chapter 4. Thank you to the Davis family, who introduced me to this concept as a teen.
- [51] A sacred bundle is not shown here out of respect for its spiritual and secretive nature.
- [52] See Good Voice (Minitari), ka-ka of the Numak'aki Manaduse-wisek (One-Enemy-Killed) ceremony bundle in 1910, narrating the bundle's history in volume 9 (1910), MHS-Wilson.
- [53] Wied-Neuwied recorded that Ahschüpsa-Masihichsi, a Minitari warrior and chief from Elá-Sá (Fifth Village), came to draw a portrait of Bodmer for his own keeping in response to the fact that Ahschüpsa-Masihichsi's portrait would be traveling "to Europe" with Bodmer; see March 2, 1834 (JAM 3:154).
- [54] December 5, 1833 (JAM 3:94).
- [55] August 9, 1833 (JAM 3:355–56). For a portrait with the hat of the *soldat*, see that of Addíh-Hiddísch (Minitari).
- [56] My interpretation here counters the dominant scholarly view of Native dress as an "ethnographic lens" on the part of a portrait's maker; see Truettner, ed., *West as America*; and Truettner, *Painting Indians and Building Empires*.
- [57] Catlin also recorded a version, along with a portrait of Mató-Tópe and Catlin's copies of Mató-Tópe's own mark making; see Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, Letter 21.

[58] “Men’s Age Societies,” volume 10 (1911), MHS-Wilson.

[59] Alfred W. Bowers, “A History of the Mandan and Hidatsa” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1948), 177.

[60] After death, a warrior’s rights transferred to his kin; see the notes for collected objects nos. 17 and 44, volume 9 (1910), MHS-Wilson.

[61] The definitive work on the sitter’s co-creation of his or her portrait is Harry Berger Jr., *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). For an approach to eighteenth-century Native portraiture utilizing notions of self-fashioning, see Elizabeth Hutchinson, “The Dress of His Nation,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 45, nos. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2011): 209–28.

[62] Berger Jr., *Fictions of the Pose*, 4. Emphasis in the original.

[63] Appendix 5 (JAM 3:508).

[64] Appendix 5 (JAM 3:508).

[65] Appendix 5 (JAM 3:508).

[66] Stevens, “Cultural Mediations.”

[67] For an articulation of the ongoing silences and mythologies of manifest destiny, particularly in the stories told by scholars, see the introduction to Alice Beck Kehoe, *The Land of Prehistory: A Critical History of American Archaeology* (New York: Routledge, 1998). For an account of these inherited silences and mythologies within archaeology and its effects on contemporary scholarship, see Severin Fowles, “The Perfect Subject (Postcolonial Object Studies),” *Journal of Material Culture* 21, no. 1 (2016): 9–27. In the case of Numak’aki peoples specifically, it is primarily the work of Alfred W. Bowers that informs descriptions of Numak’aki culture, including in the recent Pulitzer Prize–winning history by Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2014).

Illustrations

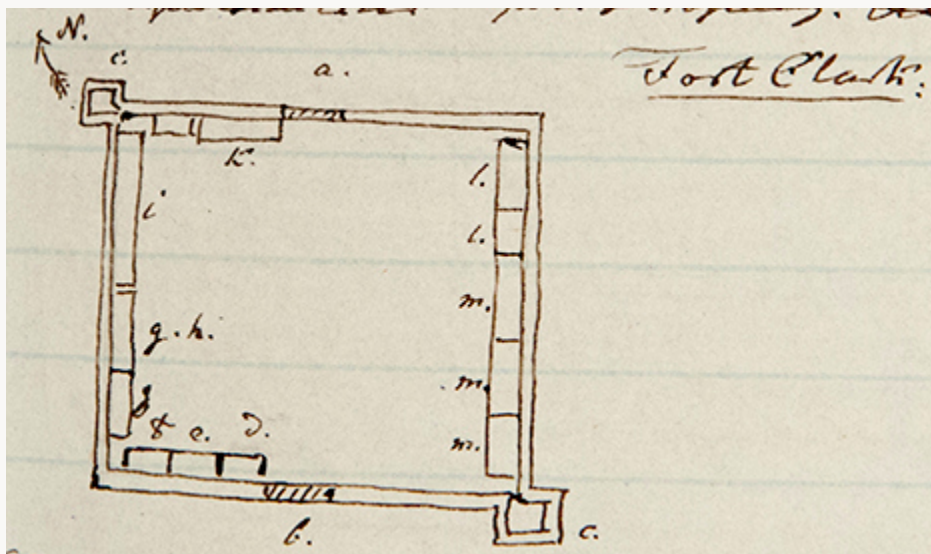


Fig. 1, Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied, Plan of Fort Clark, 1833–34. From *Manuscript Journal of Prince Maximilian's Travels in North America, parts 15–29, vol. 3, 1833–34*. Ink on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 511.NNG. Image in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Numak'aki, Calumet stem with feather fan, ca. 1780–1803. Wood, feathers, skin, hair, leather, quill, pigment, hide, and silk. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard College, Cambridge. Gift of the Heirs of David Kimball, 1899, 99-12-10/53100.2. Object in the public domain; image © President and Fellows of Harvard College. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Karl Bodmer, *Máhcsi-Karéhde, Mandan Man*, 1834. Pencil on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.266. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, Karl Bodmer, *Sih-Chidä, Mandan Man*, 1833. Watercolor on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.267. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, Mató-Tópe, *Untitled (Battle with a Cheyenne Chief)*, 1833. Watercolor and pencil on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.384. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, Karl Bodmer, *Mató-Tópe, Mandan Chief*, 1834. Watercolor on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.260. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, Mató-Tópe, *Untitled (Self-Portrait, Holding Feather-Covered Shield with Pair of Ceremonial Lances Thrust into Ground)*, 1834. Watercolor and pencil on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.384. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 8, Karl Bodmer, *Pitätapiú, Assiniboin Man*, 1833. Watercolor and pencil on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.254. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)

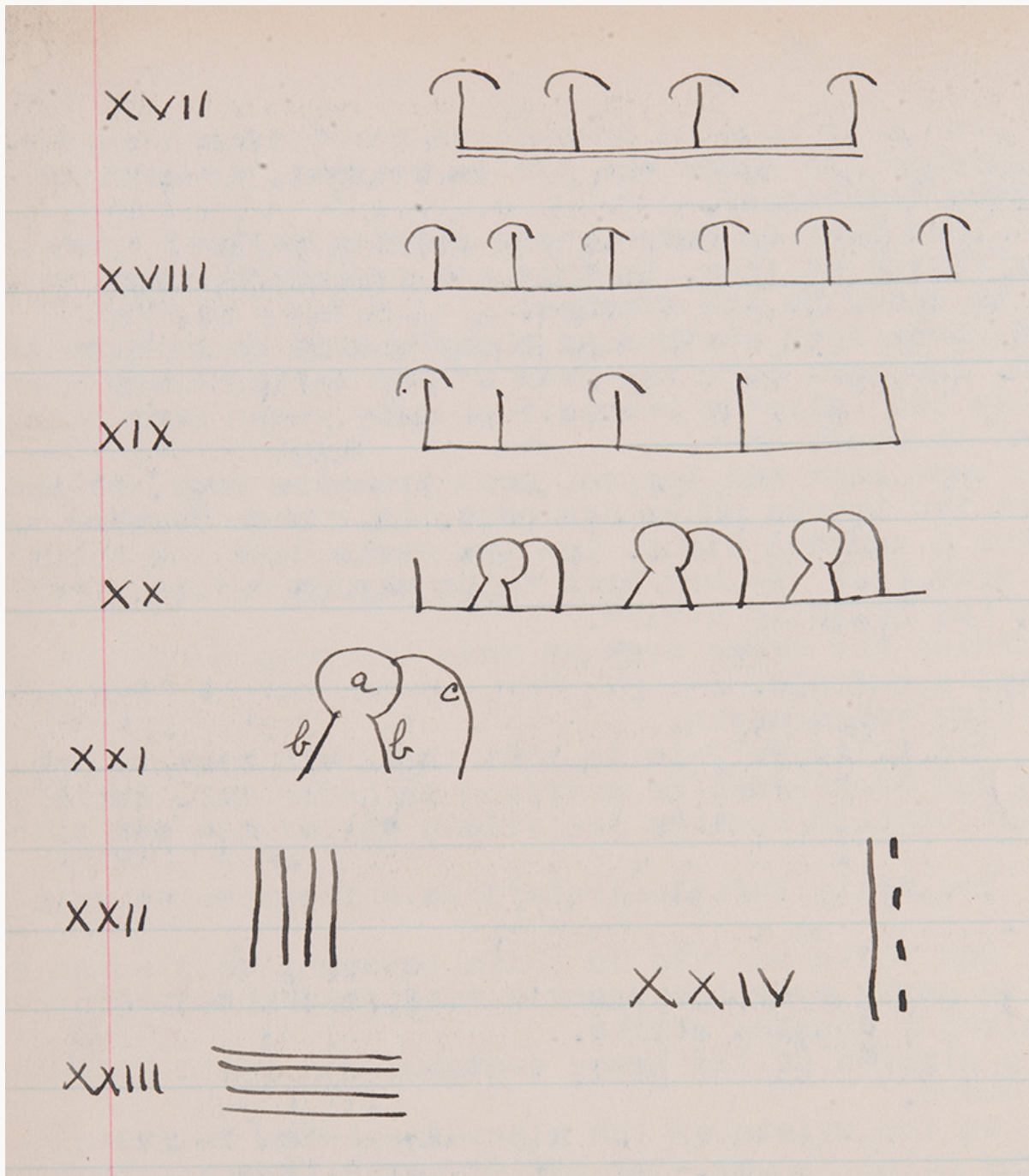


Fig. 9, Counting coup marks owned and drawn by Red White Buffalo (Numak'aki) in 1884, explained by Beaver (Numak'aki) and Butterfly (Minitari) and copied by Gilbert L. Wilson in 1909. From volume 8 (1909) of the Hidatsa-Mandan Reports, Gilbert L. and Frederick N. Wilson Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul. Notes in the public domain; image courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society and the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 10, Mató-Tópe, Bear claw necklace, 1833. Hide, blue glass beads, red pigment, and bear claws. Linden-Museum, Stuttgart. Object in the public domain; photo: A. Dreyer; image courtesy of Linden-Museum Stuttgart. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 11, Mató-Tópe, Seven wooden coup symbol replicas, 1833. Carved wood and pigments. Linden-Museum, Stuttgart. Objects in the public domain; photo: A. Dreyer; image courtesy of Linden-Museum Stuttgart. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 12, Karl Bodmer, *Interior of a Mandan Earth Lodge*, 1833–34. Watercolor and ink on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.261.A. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 13, Karl Bodmer, *Kiäsax, Piegan Blackfoot Man*, 1833. Watercolor on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.395. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 14, Karl Bodmer, *Mató-Tópe, Mandan Chief*, 1834. Watercolor on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.383. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 15, Detail of year 1789–90 from the Boíde (Flame) Oohenonpa Lakota (Two Kettles Lakota) winter count, as copied by Septima V. Koehler, ca. 1900. Ink on muslin. National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington (24.4039). Object in the public domain; photo: NMAI Photo Services; image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 16, John Reich (designer) and Robert Scot (engraver), Jefferson Peace Medal, verso, 1801. Embossed silver. American Numismatic Society, New York. Medal in the public domain; image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 17, Jean Baptiste Moncravie, *Certificate of Good Behavior*, 1833. Watercolor and ink on paper. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha. Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.461. Certificate in public domain; image courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)