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Drawing Survivance, Embodying Survivance: The Work of Contemporary Ledger Artists Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow Bird Sr.

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Drawing Survivance, Embodying Survivance: The Work of Contemporary Ledger Artists Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow Bird Sr.

Abstract
This paper examines the work of two contemporary Indigenous Artists, Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow Bird Sr. using Gerald Vizenor's theory of suriviance. I first discuss survivance, drawing on the ways both Vizenor and other scholars have used survivance in their academic works. I then move on to situating ledger art in its historical context, analyzing the ways ledger art has been historically examined and written about. The last two sections of this paper are dedicated to highlighting the ways in which two contemporary Indigenous artists, Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow Bird Sr., have embodied Vizenor's theory of survivance in their artwork. By analyzing the works of artists Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow Bird Sr. through the lens of survivance, I propose that examining ledger art through survivance gives scholars a nuanced way of understanding both nineteenth century and contemporary ledger art.

Keywords
American Indian Studies, Ledger Art, Contemporary Indigenous Artists

Disciplines
Art and Design | History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology | Indigenous Studies

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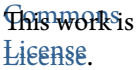
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Drawing *Survivance*, Embodying *Survivance*:
The Work of Contemporary Ledger Artists Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow Bird Sr.

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IDS 464: Senior Thesis

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Introduction

Dwayne Wilcox (Oglala Lakota) and Monte Yellow Bird Sr. (Arikara and Hidatsa) are two contemporary Indigenous artists who have used ledger art as a medium to illustrate Indigenous identity and subvert colonial narratives. Their work has been displayed in renowned art galleries and museums such as the Peabody Essex Museum, The Heard Museum, and the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.[1] While these artists' ledger drawings have garnered a significant amount of public success and visibility within recent years, their artwork has been seldom analyzed or written about within academic scholarship. Academia has mostly focused on and centered around their predecessors- Howling Wolf (Southern Cheyenne), Etahdleuh (Kiowa), Chief Killer (Southern Cheyenne)- well-known late nineteenth-century ledger artists.[2] This gap within academia has left scholars' understanding of ledger art incomplete in its analysis. Studies of nineteenth-century ledger art have analyzed ledger art as either being examples of resistance art or assimilationist art that was forcibly created under colonial oppression. These two interpretations tend to ignore the Indigenous agency imbedded in every piece of ledger art.

Instead of interpreting ledger art through these two models, I propose that analyzing ledger art through the lens of what Indigenous scholar Gerald Vizenor calls *survivance* provides scholars with a more nuanced way of interpreting and understanding both contemporary and nineteenth-century ledger art. Paring the works of artists Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow

[1] "About Black Pinto Horse," Black Pinto Horse Fine Arts, accessed April 20, 2019, https://blackpintohorsefinearts.com/black-pinto-horse.htm.; "Exhibits," Dog Hat Studio, accessed April 20, 2019, http://www.doghatstudio.com/exhibits/.

[2] Edwin L. Wade and Jackie Thompson Rand, "The Subtle Art of Resistance: Encounter and Accommodation in the Art of Fort Marion," In *Plains Indian Drawing 1865-1935: Pages from a Visual History*, ed. Janet Berlo (New York: The American Federation of Arts and The Drawing Center, 1996), 45.

Bird Sr. together, draws attention to the various ways Indigenous artists and their works embody survivance.

In the rest of this paper, I first discuss survivance, drawing on the ways both Vizenor and other scholars have used survivance in their academic works. I then move on to situating ledger art in its historical context, analyzing the ways ledger art has been historically examined and written about. The last two sections of this paper are dedicated to highlighting the ways in which two contemporary Indigenous artists, Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow Bird Sr., have embodied Vizenor's theory of survivance in their artwork. The examination of these two artists' works is based on a series of interviews myself and other scholars have done with these artists. In this study, I use my own observations and research to argue that these two artists' embody Vizenor's theory of survivance. By analyzing the works of artists Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow Bird Sr. through the lens of survivance, I propose that examining ledger art through survivance gives scholars a nuanced way of understanding both nineteenth century and contemporary ledger art. I am rejecting the notion that ledger art is either a symbol of resistance or assimilation, rather ledger art examined through the lens of survivance illustrates cultural continuance and Indigenous agency.

Survivance

Before analyzing ledger art, a firm understanding of Vizenor's theory of survivance is necessary. Early academic accounts of Native peoples and culture have been traditionally explored and studied through Western academic frameworks. These Western academic methodologies have often left out the Native voice, presenting Native people as passive victims to the colonial project. However, the rise of Indigenous researchers and Indigenous scholarship has led to a dialogue that focuses on the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge systems within

academia. Scholarship produced by early Indigenous scholars have critiqued the way Western academic disciplines have researched Native peoples and undermined Indigenous research methodologies, arguing for the incorporation and acknowledgement of traditional Indigenous knowledges within academia.[3] Among these early Native scholars is Anishinaabe writer and scholar, Gerald Vizenor.

In 1999, Gerald Vizenor coined the theoretical term *survivance* in his seminal work, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance.* The term is one of the first theoretical frameworks created by a Native scholar for the distinct purpose of reading and analyzing Native discourse.[4] The concept of survivance has shifted the way scholars understand and analyze the histories, literary practices, and narratives of Indigenous peoples. In the context of Native American Studies, survivance speaks back to the colonial narratives that often portray Native Americans as absent, powerless, passive, and tragic victims of colonization. Survivance seeks to understand and represent the complex reactions and experiences Native peoples have with colonialism. Vizenor states

> The character of survivance creates a sense of native presence over the absence, nihility, and victimry. Native Survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere re-action, however pertinent. [5]

The words Vizenor uses to define survivance—active, presence, continuance, directly contrast with the words dominance, tragedy, and victimry that have often been used by Euro-American

[3] Vine Jr. Deloria, "Anthropologist and other Friends." In *Custer Died For Your Sins*, by Vine Deloria Jr. (Oklahoma: Oklahoma University Press, 1969): 78-100.
[4] John D. Miles, "The Postindian Rhetoric of Gerald Vizenor," *College Composition and Communication* 63, no. 1 (September 2011): 36.
[5] Gerald Vizenor, "Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Practice," in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence,* ed. Gerald Vizneor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008)1.

writers, historians, politicians to describe Indigenous peoples. The very term “survivance”, survive-continuance, directly critiques and confronts these traditional colonial narratives.

The concept of survivance has no distinct or precise definition. While some acts of survivance can emerge out of acts of resistance to colonialism, survivance is not singularly tied to colonialism. Rather, survivance can be individual acts not bound to or in response to colonial oppression. Instead, survivance highlights creative and complex responses to difficult times. In other words, survivance is a concept that is unmistakably in Native stories, natural reason, active traditions, customs, and narratives resistance.[6] Native survivance is a continuance of Indigenous stories and culture. Acts and stories of survivance create a Native presence that upsets EuoAmerican control over Native peoples and public discourse.

The theory of survivance emerged from Vizenor's academic interests in language and literature. He asserts that survivance comes from the tradition of Native storytellers. Native storiers have always created a sense of continual being, they have “teased the obvious, created a sense of presence by natural reason, tease, totemic associations, and transmutations, and by tricky tropes.”[7] In his own work, Vizenor creates narratives that embodied his theory of survivance. The presence of survivance is seen most notably through the presence of imaginative scenes of nature, trickster characters, and use of Native humor in his works. Imaginative scenes of nature are depicted through the poetic nature of his haiku’s. In his book, *Cranes Arise: Haiku Scenes*, he writes

> Redwing blackbird
> Rides the cattails at the slough
> Curtain calls

[6] Gerald Vizenor,” Introduction: Literary Aesthetics and Survivance,” in *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009) 1.
[7] Vizenor,” Introduction,” 2.

Mounds of foam
Downriver from the waterfall
Float silently

Fat green flies
Square dance across grapefruit
Honor your partner [8]

These scenes of nature create a sense of survivance through their ability to connect the reader to the natural reason of the natural world. As Vizenor has stated before, Native survivance is unmistakably created in the presence of natural reason.

The trickster character is another literary tool that Vizenor uses to create stories of survivance. Vizenor defines the trickster character as a "androgynous, a comic healer and liberator in literature." [9] Trickster characters are found across Native American oral traditions and can appear in various forms including the Coyote, Raven, Spider, Rabbit, Wolverine, as well as other forms.[10] In Vizenor's own work the trickster character *naanabozho*, an important figure in the Anishinaabe oral tradition, is featured heavily in his work. His use of the trickster character in his stories creates an active sense of Nativeness. The trickster *Naanabozho* in his stories shifts, shatters, and reforms the defined structures and hierarchies of the world, they contradict and reverse dominant narratives of Native Americans. Lastly, Vizenor's use of irony and humor in his works rejects and resists traditional notions of Native vicimry and passivity. Injecting humor into his works creates a sense of Indigenous agency over colonial history.[11]

[8] Vizenor," Introduction," 6.
[9] Kirstin L. Squint, "Gerald Vizenor's Trickster Hermeneutics**,"** *Studies in American Humor* 3, No. 25 (2012), 107.
[10] Gerald Vizenor, "The Ruins of Representation: Shadow Survivance and the Literature of Dominance," *American Indian Quarterly* 17, No. 1 (Winter 1993), 19.
[11] Vizenor, "Introduction," 10.

As a result of Vizenor's use of survivance in his own literary works, survivance is most commonly applied and seen in Native literature. Contemporary Native writers such as N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Silko, James Welch, Gordon Henry, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, and Diane Glancy have constructed narratives of survivance. Vizenor's article "Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Practice", specifically looks at ways Native writers have embodied survivance in their literary works and stories.[12] In both the works of Leslie Marmon Silko and N.Scott Momaday, Vizenor considers their use of metaphors as an act of survivance. Momaday's use of metaphor is exemplified by the presence of bears and eagles in his works.[13] This presence creates a double meaning that challenges the reader's conception of the natural world. Silko, in her novel *Ceremony*, uses an ironic metaphor of survivance through the presence of mythic witch characters. In her novel, she writes that witches created white people in a competition.[14] Vizenor asserts this metaphor resists the common tropes associated with Native vicimry, rather, this use of ironic metaphor reshapes colonial structures.[15]

Vizenor has not been the only Native literary scholar that has written about the uses of survivance in Indigenous literature. Other Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars have also written extensively about the concept of survivance, applying the concept to other disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology, history, and art. Looking at the various disciplines survivance has been applied to, enhances and supports my own argument for applying survivance to Native ledger art illustrating that survivance is a concept not confined to literature.

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[12] Vizenor, "Aesthetics of Survivance," 1-23.
[13] Vizenor, "Aesthetics of Survivance," 14.
[14] Leslie Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Penguin Group, 1986), 135-138.
[15] Gerald Vizenor," Aesthetics of Survivance," in *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009) 93.

Archaeologists and anthropologists have attempted to redefine how Vizenor's theories of survivance can be applied or added to current archeological frameworks and methodologies. In his article, "Archaeologies of Indigenous Survivance and Residence", archeologist Stephen Silliman explores how the concept of survivance and residence can be added to current archeological research, focusing on an archaeological case study around the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation in southeastern Connecticut.[16] He asserts that analyzing archaeological evidence through the lens of survivance changes and challenges current understandings of past narratives. He argues past scholars have created a false dichotomy by looking at historical actions through the lens of change or resistance. Silliman suggests that survivance does not rigidly box Indigenous peoples as either changing or resisting their circumstances. Rather, survivance allows for past historical actions to be considered as persistence.

Historians have also looked at Indigenous history in the context of Native survivance. The National Museum of the American Indian has used Vizenor's definition of survivance in their One Peoples gallery exhibition to illustrate how Native people have resisted and survived under colonial rule.[17] Anne Ruggles Gere in her article, "An Art of Survivance: Angel DeCora at Carlisle", examines the legacy of famous Native artist Angel DeCora in the context of survivance narratives. Gere asserts that DeCora's ability to teach Native artistic practices to the children attending the Carlisle Indian School was in itself an act of survivance that enabled Native artistic traditions to survive. Not only did her teaching enable Indigenous traditions to

[16] Stephen Silliman, "Archaeologies of Indigenous Survivance and Residence: Navigating Colonial and Scholarly Dualities." In *Rethinking Colonial Pasts Through Archaeology*, eds. N. Ferris, R. Harrison, and M. V. Wilcox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 57–75.
[17] Sonya Atalay , "No Sense of the Struggle: Creating a Context for Survivance at the NMAI," *American Indian Quarterly 30*, No. ¾ (Summer - Autumn, 2006): 597-618.

continue, DeCora redefined and reshaped colonial perceptions and notions of American Indian art.[18]

In the context of art and art history, the concept of survivance has been loosely applied to the work of contemporary Native artists. Drawing on one aspect of survivance, Allan Ryan analyses ways contemporary First Nations artists have been influenced by the Trickster characters from Native oral traditions. Taking a critical look at various works from Indigenous Artists, the book explores the "trickster discourse" imbedded in the works of contemporary artists.[19] He argues the trickster discourse employed in the works of Native artists deconstructs the colonial narratives and art stereotypes employed through the past five centuries. Indigenous artists employing trickster characters in their artwork are inscribing new meanings into art, creating their own cultural legacies, and correcting past misrepresentations of American Indians.[20]

Exhibition catalogs and gallery curators have also applied the concept of survivance to the work of contemporary Native artists and gallery exhibitions. "Embodying Survivance", an article produced by the magazine *Art in America,* argues **Demian DinéYazhi´s (**Diné**) artwork embodies survivance by highlighting the range of Indigenous experiences under colonial rule and reterritorializing colonial spaces**.[21] Another article, "The Art of 'Survivance'", illustrates how the gallery exhibition "Ancient Inspirations: The Pueblo Pottery of Lorraine Gala Lewis and LaDonna Victoriano" manifests the idea of survivance by showing how traditional

[18] Anne Ruggles, "An Art of Survivance: Angel DeCora at Carlisle" *American Indian Quarterly* 28, No. ¾ (Summer-Autumn 2004), 649-684.
[19] Allan Ryan, "Introduction," in *The Trickster Shift: Humor and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, (Toronto: UBC Press, 1999), xiii.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Manuel Abreu, "Embodying Survivance," *Art in America,* September 25, 2017, https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazines/embodying-survivance/

Indigenous pottery practices have continued under oppression.[22] Lastly, in the gallery exhibit "Face to Face: Carl Beam and Andy Warhol", the curator argues that First Nations artist's, Carl Beam, represents the concept of survivance in his *The Columbus Suite* series by subverting the colonial narrative of Christopher Columbus "discovering the Americas". [23]

Vizenor's theory of survivance has been infrequently applied to Indigenous art and art history, I argue that survivance is seen throughout the history and production of ledger art. Both nineteenth century and twentieth century Indigenous ledger artists created a public discourse that subverts the colonial narrative and challenges colonial perceptions of American Indians. Survivance is embodied in creative responses to difficult times. These ledger artists create survivance narratives with their art.

Art of Resistance or Art of Assimilation: Contextualizing Ledger Art

The term ledger art refers to the late nineteenth-century Plains art created on paper from ledgers- books that contained business transactions and accounts. [24] Some of the most famous ledger artists of this period came from the Native prisoners held captive at Fort Marion. Howling Wolf (Southern Cheyenne), Etahdleuh (Kiowa), Chief Killer (Southern Cheyenne) all created ledger art, documenting their journey to the Fort and their subsequent stay at the fort as prisoners.[25]

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[22] Elizabeth Parsons, "The Art of 'Survivance,'" The Column, November 2, 2018, https://columns.wlu.edu/the-art-of-survivance/

[23] Keira Koch, "Face to Face, Carl Beam and Andy Warhol" *Schmucker Art Catalogs*. 29, https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/artcatalogs/29

[24] Joyce Szabo, "Preface," in *Howling Wolf and the History of Ledger Art*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), xiii.

[25] For more information see Janet Catherin Berlo, *Plains Indian Drawings 1865-1935* (New York: Harry N Abrams in association with the American Federation of Arts and the Drawing Center, 1996).

Art historian Joyce Szabo writes that ledger art comes from a much older Plains nation tradition of heraldic hide painting. Plains nation men would paint images on to buffalo rawhide to illustrate heroic or brave deeds, such as accomplishment in war or battle.[26] As buffalo populations started to decrease, Plains artists started to use paper as a way to continue the heraldic artistic tradition.[27] However, it must be noted that hide painting did not instantaneously disappear when leger paper was introduced. For a time, both ledger paper and rawhides were used as artistic mediums.[28]

While ledger art continued to depict war accomplishments and battles scenes, new subject matter was introduced as life started to change for the Plains nations. During the late nineteenth century, the U.S government had begun to push Plains people onto reservations. Reservation life drastically changed and upset the traditional Plains life.[29] Ledger art reflected this change and new culture climate. Reservation era ledger art shifted the role of artists as well as changed the subject matter of the art. Ledger art was no longer solely produced to only depict the accomplishments of a warrior or battle scenes. Rather, ledger art created on reservations during the last quarter of nineteenth century focused more on domestic and social scenes. [30] Additionally, ledger art started to have a EuroAmerican audience. Soldier, scouts, visitors, and anthropologist were eager to purchase ledger books filled with drawings.[31]

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, ledger art continued to develop and change as traditional life on the Plains continued to be disrupted. These tumultuous

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[26] Joyce Szabo, "The Art and Artists of the Plains," in *Howling Wolf and the History of Ledger Art*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994),10.
[27] Joyce Szabo, "Ledger Art," in *Howling Wolf and the History of Ledger Art*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994),15.
[28] Szabo, "Ledger Art", 16.
[29] Szabo, "Ledger Art", 16.
[30] Szabo, "Ledger Art", 24.
[31] Szabo, "Ledger Art", 16.

times produced some of the most well-known and studied ledger art. During the years 1874-1875, the Native peoples living on the Southern Plains were living under harsh conditions.[32] Euro-American settlers staked claim to the land, heavily impacting the food supply and hunting grounds of these Native nations. Furthermore, the United States Army was sent to the Southern plains to protect settler's as well as force Native peoples onto reservations.[33] Mounting frustrations lead the Native Americans living on the Southern Plains to attack settlers and cavalry units. To squash any Native resistance on the Plains, the U.S Army and Cavalry unleashed ruthless attacks against the Native peoples.[34] The army annihilated the buffalo while the cavalry burnt down Native camps and killed their horses in order to pressure those who refused to settle on reservations. The U.S Army wiped out any sign of Native rebellion and captured any American Indian who was involved. The Plains warriors were charged with attacking settlers and taken to forts to be imprisoned.[35]

On February 23, 1875, a group of Kiowa surrendered to Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt and taken to Fort Sill in Oklahoma.[36] Among those captured was Etahdleuh Doanmoe, a Kiowa who produced numerous ledger artworks documenting his time at Fort Marion.[37] These Kiowa joined other Kiowa, Cheyenne, Arapho Caddo, and Comanche who had been taken to the fort under military arrest. Those prisoners who were considered the most dangerous were transported

[32] Phillip Earenfight, "From the Plains to the Coast," in *A Kiowa's Odyssey*, ed. Phillip Earenfight (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 12.
[33] Phillip Earenfight, "From the Plains to the Coast," in *A Kiowa's Odyssey*, ed. Phillip Earenfight (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 13.
[34]Earenfight,"From the Plain to the Coast," 13.
[35] Earenfight,"From the Plain to the Coast," 12.
[36] Earenfight,"From the Plain to the Coast," 13.
[37] Marilee Jantzer-White, "Narrative and Landscape in the Drawing of Etahdleuh Doanmoe," In *Plains Indian Drawing 1865-1935: Pages from a Visual History*, ed. Janet Berlo (New York: The American Federation of Arts and The Drawing Center, 1996), 45.

from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to Fort Marion in Florida by Captain Richard Henry Pratt.[38] Seventy-two Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche, Kiowa, and Caddo men were transported and then held prisoner at Fort Marion. [39] Prisoners such as Wohaw, Sotom, Howling Wolf, Squint Eyes, Making Medicine, Cohe, Bear's heart, and Etahdleuh, produced some of the most well-known and famous ledger art during the late nineteenth century.[40]

At Fort Marion, Pratt endeavored to reform these "prisoners of war" by exposing and subjugating them to a military-style educational experience. This new form of penal reform aimed to "civilize" Native prisoners according to EuroAmerican models.[41] When the prisoners arrived at Fort Marion, their hair was cut, and they were dressed in army uniforms. Pratt established a strict regimented schedule for the prisoners each day. They were expected to participate in calisthenics, drill, study reading and writing, and take religious instruction.[42] Additionally, the prisoners helped in local industries by providing manual labor, harvesting oranges, drilling wells, lifting lumber, and clearing ground for planting.[43]

During their time at Fort Marion, Pratt encouraged the prisoners to draw because he saw these drawings as a way for the prisoners to document their experience.[44] One arrival, Pratt gave several of the captives' paper and pencils so that they could make drawings of their journey,

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[38] Richard Pearce, "Introduction," in *Women and Ledger Art: Four Contemporary Native American Artists*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), 4.
[39] Diane Glancy. *Fort Marion Prisoners and the Trauma of Native Education.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 1-3.
[40] Wade and Jackie Thompson Rand, "The Subtle Art of Resistance," 45.
[41] Pratt's Fort Marion education reform experiment was the precursor to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School founded in 1879. For more information see: Barbara Landis, "About the Carlisle Indian Industrial School," *Modern American Poetry*, http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/erdrich/boarding/carlisle.htm.
[42] Pearce, "Introduction," 4.
[43] Joyce Szabo, "Fort Marion Art," in *Howling Wolf and the History of Ledger Art*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 66.
[44] Joyce Szabo, "Fort Marion Art,"67.

record activities at the fort, and depict scenes from their old life on the Plains.[45] The scenes depicted in the ledger art produced at Fort Marion recorded new experiences and images as the artists encountered a different part of the country. Many of the drawings represent the long trip to Fort Marion, showing scenes of prisoners loading wagons, riding trains, and entering new cities. One image by Chief Killer (Southern Cheyenne) depicts two sets of trains going through a city documenting the prisoner's journey to Fort Marion.[46] Once at Fort Marion, the subject matter ledger drawings reflected daily life. Drawings of uniformed prisoners engaged in military exercises, classroom situations, outings, social scenes, and military chores were represented in the ledger art produced at Fort Marion. Another ledger drawing by artist Chief Killer illustrates Fort Marion prisoners giving archery lessons to female visitors. In one of his drawings, artist Howling Wolf (Southern Cheyenne) depicts a classroom scene. Thirteen prisoners are drawn sitting at tables, pencils in hand, as a teacher instructs them in a classroom lesson. What is interesting about Fort Marion ledger art is the fact that there are relatively few traditional scenes of war and horse capture. The ledger art that does depict more traditional scenes, shie away from full on combative battle scenes. Rather they depict small scale hunting scenes.[47] This absence of traditional battle scenes brings up an important question surrounding the issue of Native agency.

While some accounts assert that the Fort Marion artists received no instruction in drawing during their stay at Fort Marion, the artists were encouraged by Pratt and military officials to draw in their "native" manner. [48] The prisoners knew that Pratt used many of these ledger drawings as gifts, sending ledger books to influential men and women who could be

[45] Phillip Earenfight, "Reconstructing A Kiowa's Odyssey," in *A Kiowa's Odyssey*, ed. Phillip Earenfight (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 57.
[46] Szabo, "Fort Marion Art," 69.
[47] Szabo, "Fort Marion Art,"70.
[48]Szabo, "Fort Marion Art," 70.

future donors to Pratt's reform and civilizing project.[49] This factor coupled with the fact that these men were considered prisoners of war and lived in a military prison illustrates that there were clear power hierarchies at play. This aspect of the ledger art created a Fort Marion has created some controversy within academia. Some scholars argue that the Fort Marion ledger art and other ledger art produced under similar circumstances should be identified as resistance art. In the article, "The Subtle Art of Resistance," Edwin L. Wade and Jackie Thompson Rand argue that the artwork produced at Fort Marion allowed for Native American beliefs and values to be expressed and continued in a non-confrontational manner. [50] Both scholars, Janet Catherine Berlo and Gerald McMaster counter this idea of resistance, writing that the ledgers' "original identity has been distorted and lost" and attribute this "distortion" or "loss" to what they call a "palimpsest."[51] Meaning they consider ledger art to be distorted by EuroAmerican influences and therefore should be cautiously analyzed as examples of Indigenous agency and resistance. While both these interpretations have merit, looking at ledger art through the lens of survivance offers a slightly different interpretation of ledger art, nuancing the resistance and acculturation arguments.

Analyzing historic ledger art through the lens of survivance allows for the Native artists and art to have more agency. Survivance allows for a more fluid interpretative approach and does not strictly confining ledger art to either products of resistance or assimilation. Survivance does not narrowly interpret to resistance, rather survivance is a creative response to times of struggle. It is endurance, a state of being, an active presence. Some ledger artists might have had

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[49] Szabo, "Fort Marion Art," 71.
[50] Wade and Jackie Thompson Rand, "The Subtle Art of Resistance," 49.
[51]Becca Gercken, "Manifest Meanings: The Selling (Not Telling) of American Indian History and the Case of "The Black Horse Ledger," *American Indian Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2010), 525; Janet Catherine Berlo and Gerald McMaster, "Encyclopedias of Experience: A Curatorial Dialogue on Drawing and Drawing Books," in Berlo, *Plains Indian Drawings,* 24.

more freedom in the creation of their work, while other artists might have been pressured to illustrate and depict certain images to EuroAmerican audiences. Both of these situations are acts of survivance. They are creative responses to times of struggle. These artists are actively responding to their struggles and creating something that continues Indigenous narratives. While there is little written or oral documentation surrounding these nineteenth-century ledger artists' own understanding and interpretation of their art, looking at ways contemporary Native ledger artists engage with and embody survivance in their own work gives scholars insight to how nineteenth-century ledger art is exemplifies survivance.

Dwayne Wilcox: Humor and Irony as Survivance

> I use the visual language of the Great Plains people to continue the story of my culture, bringing to life the impact of modern life styles, and how that is woven into the Native world... I think that my art has reached viewers who understand that even though we live in America, we have struggled with our past experience with this outside culture and truly endure a different value of materialism.[52]

On May 1, 2019, I had the opportunity to interview Dwayne Wilcox over the phone. By interviewing Wilcox, I was able to glean information surrounding his artistic style and decision to use ledger paper as an artistic medium. In his interview, Wilcox spoke about how his experience living on a reservation and growing up in an Indigenous community impacted and influenced his artwork. The interview illuminated how he uses Native humor in his artwork to deconstruct colonial perceptions of Indigenous peoples and gave me a framework to analyze his ledger art through the lens of survivance.

Dwayne Wilcox (Oglala Lakota), was born in was born in Kadoka, South Dakota in 1957. Growing up on the reservation surrounded by traditional Native culture, his upbringing

[52] "Dwayne Wilcox," Joan Mitchell Foundation, accessed May 20, 2019, https://joanmitchellfoundation.org/artist-programs/artist-grants/painter-sculptors/2017/dwayne-wilcox

had a profound impact on his development and work as an artist. Coming from a large family of nine, he grew up around Native art and tradition. His mother, as well as a few of his siblings, were artists. Wilcox attended art school for a short period of time wanting to become a "realist artist".[53] However, he became increasingly aware that the art curriculum taught at school only focused on EuroAmerican techniques and perceptions of art. He saw that art textbooks only conformed to European standards of art and "didn't even include Indigenous people on the art timeline." [54] Annoyed at the lack of diversity within academia, Wilcox made the decision to leave art school. While Wilcox never returned to art school, his lack of formal training did not inhibit him from becoming a full-time professional artist.

Living on the reservation also made Wilcox aware of the way Indigenous peoples were being portrayed in contemporary art. The art featuring Native people was marketed as "tourist art" depicting only "the majestic West" and "stoic landscapes with tipis." Wilcox stated, "What was missing from art was our humor. Nobody was touching on our sense of Native humor." Realizing that Native art did not depict the contemporary reality of Native people, Dwayne started creating art that depicted his experience growing up on the reservation and own Native identity. He chose ledger paper as his artist medium because of the long history of the use of ledger paper by the Plain Nations. Collectively, his ledger art presents a nuanced narrative of European colonization that illustrates the legacy of colonialism from the viewpoint of Indigenous peoples. Wilcox's use of irony and humor not only makes viewers think about how narratives of colonialism are constructed by dominant groups but also illustrates the contemporary reality of Indigenous peoples. By using ledger art to convey Native culture as a living culture through

[53] Interview with Dwayne Wilcox, May 1, 2019.
[54] Interview with Dwayne Wilcox, May 1, 2019.

ironic humor and depicting vices of the modern times, Dwayne Wilcox's work embodies survivance- "an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion." [55] Survivance is most notably depicted in the works *Cheese With That Whine, Wow! Real Blooded White People,* and Y*ou Can Trust the Government Ask Any Indian.*

Cheese With That Whine (Figure 1.) subverts colonial narratives by injecting ironic humor and contemporary allusions into historical narratives. The ledger drawing depicts two Euro-American tail-coated waiters serving an Indigenous man expensive luxury food items. The blond hair man on the left, who looks suspiciously like General George Custer, is holding up a block of cheese that is labeled "gourmet USDA approved." The man other waiter is pouring a glass of port while also holding a menu that reads "Welcome to SAM's café." Sitting at the table, the Indigenous man holds a sign that states "300 Broken Treaties."

Although the figures are all drawn in modern clothing and are seated in a contemporary restaurant setting, Wilcox is drawing the viewers' attention to an alternative historical perspective in a contemporary light. While Wilcox does not explicitly state what historical time he is drawing upon, the figures and symbols imbedded in the ledger drawing evoke an image of the mid-nineteenth-century conflicts between Native American and the U.S military. The "gourmet USDA approved" cheese is a comedic look at food subsidy cheese the government gave Native people.[56] The "300 Broken Treaties" sign reminds audiences of the multiple treaties the U.S Government made with many Indigenous nations and then subsequently broke. The most well-known of these treaties is the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty which recognized the Lakota

[55] Samuel V. Parisian, "From Indian to Postindian: Survivance Tales of Native American Representation in Contemporary Art." (Masters diss. Sotheby's Institute of Art, 2012), 17.
[56]Stephen Glueckurt, *Dwayne Wilcox: Above the Fruited Plains* (Missoula, MT: Missoula Art Museum, 2014), 1.

(Sioux) Nation's exclusive possession of their lands.[57] Although the viewer is unsure if the figure is supposed to be a representation of Custer, the figure's bright bold signature "yellow hair" leads the viewer to think of General George Custer and his fraught relationship with the Indigenous people of the Plains. The restaurant's name, "SAM's Café" is a play on Uncle Sam- the national personification of the American Government. All these symbols and figures combined culminate into one critique on the way the U.S government have historical and continually treated Native Americans. Setting the subjects in a modern restaurant setting reminds audiences that these issues and Indigenous peoples do not singularly lie in the past, rather they are a part of the present.

Another ledger drawing that subverts the colonial lens is *Wow! Real Blooded White People* (Figure 2.). The title of the works has notes of irony in it, drawing on the EuroAmerican conception of who is and can considered a "real Indian". The ledger drawing shows a Euro-American couple standing with blank expressions on their face as a group of three Native Americans are taking photos of the couple. This image subverts and redefines the relationship between Euro-American tourists and Native subject as an object to be studied and watched. Wilcox states, "Photographs of Native people in regalia are prized by those who wish to see them in their natural habitat. Imagine native playing that role!"[58] Historically, Indigenous peoples and their culture have been put on display since the rise of Wild West shows during the mid-nineteenth century. One of the most famous of these shows being Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West show. These shows would put Native peoples on display for EuroAmerican audiences,

[57] Steven Newcomb, "Five Hundred Years of Injustice: The Legacy of Fifteenth Century Religious Prejudice." in *Native American Voices: A Reader,* eds. Susan Lobo, Steven Talbot, and Traci L. Morris (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2009), 101-104.

[58] Stephen Glueckurt, *Dwayne Wilcox*, 2.

through re-enactments of Plains Indian battles or cultural performances. In these shows, the American Indian was represented as fierce warriors and "primitive," and the Plains Indian culture came to represent all Native America.[59] Wilcox's image draws on these historical themes while also reminding audiences that these constructions of Indigenous American still pervade the contemporary imagination of the American public. He states,

> The inspiration for this piece came from 14 years of travel with a cultural exchange program that took adolescents from the reservation to the east coast for dance performances. People come up and take pictures of you like you're some kind of circus trick. Until you're in that awkward position, you won't be able to know.[60]

By subverting the narrative, drawing Indigenous people taking pictures of two Euro-American tourists, Wilcox critiques and confronts audiences with the way EuroAmerican culture has predominately viewed Indigenous people and culture. He is engaging with the historical and contemporary impacts of colonialism.

In the work, *You Can Trust the Government Ask Any Indian* (Figure 3), Wilcox continues to draw attention to the government's poor treatment of Native peoples. Wilcox was inspired to draw this image after meeting two Native people from Oklahoma and seeing it on their car. The image shows two Native men with one Native woman standing in front of a Cadillac. The woman is pointing to a bumper sticker on the car, telling the two men that she admires their bumper sticker. The sicker reads "You can trust the government, just ask an Indian." This statement, while riddled with ironic humor, is a reminder of the string of treaties and promises broken by the government that continue to impact Indigenous people today.

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[59] Juli A. Winchester, "New Western History Doesn't Have to Hurt: Revisionism at the Buffalo Bill Museum." The Public Historian, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Fall 2009): 77-79.

[60] "Dwayne Wilcox: Ledger Artist," Richard Pearce, accessed May 20, 2019, https://rpearce4.wixsite.com/dwayne-wilcox

Wilcox's use of ironic humor in his art illustrates critical aspects of survivance. Through humor, Wilcox's ledger art communicates complex narratives and themes that revolve around Indignity and the colonial legacy. His art illustrates the contemporary reality of Indigenous people while also providing critical commentary on the past and present treatment of Native peoples. Looking at his work through the lens of survivance, it is clear that Wilcox uses humor as a tool to break down barriers and subvert colonial narratives. Through the traditional form of ledger art, Wilcox draws images that actively engages with the colonial legacy refusing to be seen as passive victims of colonialism.

Monte Yellow Bird Sr.- Historical and Cultural Remembrance as Survivance

> There are so many stories untold- the issues we face, the incongruities that have occurred to our people, our history and the true heartbeat of our heritage. At its core, lies a harmonic balance between humanity and nature which I like to showcase using color representation and symbolism that activate the viewer's imagination.[61] – Monte Yellow Bird

I also had the pleasure of interviewing Monte Yellow Bird Sr. I first came across his work while paging through an exhibition catalogue for the gallery exhibit *Re- Riding History: From the Southern Pains to Matanzas Bay*. I was intrigued by the way he used ledger art to remember past colonial injustices and highlight traditional Native cultural practices. In his interview, he shared why he decided to work with ledger paper and the rationale behind his artistic choices. After interviewing Monte Yellow Bird, I was given the framework to understand and examine his ledger art through the lens of survivance. While both Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow Bird Sr. depict survivance though their ledger art, they embody Vizenor's theory in drastically different ways. Dwayne Wilcox responds to colonial narratives by using irony and

[61] "Re-Riding History Artists Statements and Bios", Re-Riding History, accessed May 2, 2019, https://www.reridinghistory.org/artist-statements-and-bios.

humor while Monte Yellow Bird ledger art embodies survivance through historical and cultural remembrance.

Monte Yellow Bird Sr, also known as Black Pinto Horse, is Arikara and Hidatsa from the Three Affiliated Tribes Reservation in North Dakota. At the age of sixteen he received formal art training at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) high school program in Santa Fe New Mexico. Yellow Bird describes his time at IAIA as life changing, "evoking pride of my culture and a new self-identity."[62] Years later, he decided to further his art and history studies at Minot State University, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2002. His decision to use ledger paper as an artistic medium came from his desire to continue family tradition. His late grandfathers, Strikes Enemy and Bears Teeth, were both ledger artists. Intrigued by his family history and the cultural legacy ledger art has with Plain nation, Yellow Bird uses ledger art as a way to remember historical trials and struggles his ancestors faced under American colonialism. He writes "his contemporary [ledger art] style depicts the historic heartbeat of Indigenous nations."[63] By using ledger art to confront and illustrate historical realities and narratives, Yellow Bird's work embodies survivance- the refusal to be a passive victim to colonial history. Aspects of survivance are illustrated in the works, *The Hunt; a Rites of Passage when we were warriors* (Figure 4), *The Journey to Remove Color From the People (*Figure 5), and *Take Your Place Among Us* (Figure 6).

The Hunt; a Rites of Passage when we were warriors and *The Journey to Remove Color From the People*, have similar themes and narratives imbedded in them. *The Hunt; a Rites of Passage when we were warriors* employs a layering effect, symbolizing how historic memory

[62] "Biography," Black Pinto Horse Fine Arts, accessed May 20, 2019, https://blackpintohorsefinearts.com/black-pinto-horse.htm.
[63] Black Pinto Horse Fine Arts, "Biography."

consists of multiple layers. The piece is intentionally designed on ledger paper from the United States Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs. *The Hunt; a Rites of Passage when we were warriors* depicts four colorful traditional Plains warriors at the top of the image, symbolizing traditional ancestral ways of hunting. According to Yellow Bird, the more vibrantly colored men in the middle ground illustrate a more contemporary version of ledger art. As the viewers eye moves down the composition, they finally see a young man in a school uniform, hunting a USDA approved rabbit at the Carlisle Indian School.[64] The grey building in the background paired with the grey outfit of the student is representative of the assimilationist policies employed at the Carlisle Indian School. The Carlisle Indian Industrial School was founded by Richard Pratt after his experiment at Fort Marion. The school's purpose was to educated Native children to conform to EuroAmerican society and culture. Pratt famously stated that the school's intention was to "Kill the Indian, and Save the Man", attempting to wipe any trace of Indigenous identity.[65] By drawing a contrast between the vibrant images of traditional hunters and the muted gray tones of the school uniform, Yellow Bird is visually illustrating the government's desire to strip Native peoples of their culture and identity.

He employs this same technique in his ledger drawing, *The journey to remove color from the People*. The drawing is intentionally done on an antique piece of United States Indian Industrial School note paper from the office of R.H. Pratt, Capt. The composition employs a layering effect, depicting the mental, physical, and spiritual impact the historic era of forced assimilation and cultural genocide had on Indigenous people and life.[66] The ledger drawing is

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[64] "Home," Black Pinto Horse Fine Arts, accessed May 20, 2019, https://blackpintohorsefinearts.com/index.htm
[65] ""Kill the Indian, and Save the Man": Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans," History Matters, accessed May 20, 2019m http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4929.
[66] "Re-Riding History Artists Statements and Bios", Re-Riding History, accessed May 2, 2019, https://www.reridinghistory.org/artist-statements-and-bios.

broken up into three sections. At the top, three warriors represent "the mind-altering process of removing their cultural self-identity and color from their natural world."[67] In the middle section of the composition lies the image of the train or "Iron Horse." The train has a double meaning. First, it is a reminder that the train systems opened the EuroAmerican frontier to Euro-American settlers to settle on Indigenous lands. The train also stands as a symbol of forced removal, reminding viewers that the train was also the instrument that forcefully transported Tribal nations from their homelands to an unfamiliar place.[68] Yellow Bird's ledger drawing is a sense of Indigenous remembrance, the refusal to let the struggles of his people and ancestors be forgotten. This refusal to be forgotten from the historical narrative embodies survivance. Yellow Bird is confronting EuroAmerican audiences with the colonial narrative. His ledger art is actively engaging in a historical dialogue. It is survivance because through his leger art, he is continuing to remember the stories of his people.

While both *The Hunt; a Rites of Passage when we were warriors* and *The Journey to Remove Color From the People* evoke a sense of historical remembrance of Indigenous history, Yellow Bird also illustrates cultural remembrance and continuance in his ledger art. His drawing *Take Your Place Among Us*, illustrates this theme. Two Native elders standing over two children are illustrated in the midst of a ceremony. The vibrant yellow sun and bluebirds along with the pastel flowers depict the changing of spiritual seasons. Yellow Bird writes, "This piece displays the Rites of Passage Ceremony led by a Traditional First Nation elder, as he teaches the sacred story of girls becoming knowledgeable young women and boys evolving into responsible young

[67] "Re-Riding History Artists Statements and Bios", Re-Riding History, accessed May 2, 2019, https://www.reridinghistory.org/artist-statements-and-bios.
[68] "Re-Riding History Artists Statements and Bios", Re-Riding History, accessed May 2, 2019, https://www.reridinghistory.org/artist-statements-and-bios.

men."[69] What Yellow Bird is doing in this image is recalling and performing the spiritual traditions of Indigenous people, illustrating cultural endurance and continuance both are aspects of survivance.

Conclusion

Both ledger artists, Dwayne Wilcox and Monte Yellow Bird Sr., embody Vizenor's theory of survivance but in seemingly different ways. Wilcox's ledger art uses Native humor and irony to subvert colonial narratives to reveal the contemporary reality of Indigenous people, while Yellow Bird draws on themes of historical and cultural remembrance. The ledger drawings of both artists embody survivance. They are refusing to let their Native identity to be silenced, confronting narratives of struggle. There is Indigenous agency within their artwork. Analyzing contemporary ledger art through the perspective of survivance can enrich current understandings of ledger art. Survivance seen through contemporary ledger art shows that there is no one mold or model for Indigenous agency. Survivance allows for fluidity and traditions to shift, reform, and change. Both artists exemplified survivance and understood their artwork as subverting colonial narratives. However, each artist responds to the colonial narratives in different ways- one through humor and another through remembrance.

Academia has mostly focused analyzing nineteenth-century ledger art through the lens of resistance or assimilation. Survivance allows for a more flexible interpretation of ledger art, showing that all ledger art is an act of survivance because it is a creative act, a response to times of struggle. Furthermore, including contemporary ledger art within academia shifts the way ledger art is understood. Currently, ledger art is seen as a past tradition and is mostly understood

[69] "Home," Black Pinto Horse Fine Arts, accessed May 20, 2019, https://blackpintohorsefinearts.com/index.htm

in the context of the nineteenth-century. Contemporary ledger artists illustrate that ledger art is not confined to its nineteenth-century past, rather it is actively engaged and continued in the present. By viewing ledger art as survivance, scholars can acknowledge that ledger art is an intergenerational dialogue that cannot be boxed into the traditional resistance and assimilationist frameworks. Rather ledger art is an act of survivance, the continuance and persistence of Native traditions and stories.

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