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ART HISTORY'S CO-INHABITANTS

Disabled Artistic Approaches to Indigeneity

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What are some disabled artistic approaches to indigeneity? This chapter examines the contemporary art practices of Oceanic artist Pelenakeke Brown, who resides in Aotearoa New Zealand, and Lenape and Potawatomi neuro-diverse artist Vanessa Dion Fletcher, who resides in Canada.[1] Both artists have appropriated long-held and respected practices tied to their Indigenous heritage through *tatau* and quillwork, respectively, in an attempt to establish a sense of place, a sense of cultural affinity, and a sense of who they are. Both artists have also used their unique disabled embodied knowledge to activate production of Indigenous traditions, customs, and rituals, inspired initially by their mothers, and feminist guidance. They create their artwork through individual physical, cognitive and neurodiverse capacities, be it through cerebral palsy or short-term memory loss, through choreography, space, time, and language. Their approaches posit disability as a methodology that frames the production of the work. In other words, disability perspective is an integral funnel or channel in the path to executing a final product or object. Their intersectional identities as disabled Indigenous women are inextricably woven together. Brown and Dion Fletcher draw on their personal ties to these histories through multidisciplinary art forms.

Brown explores her intersectional identity through a practice grounded in the Samoan concept of the *vā*, which represents in-between space and/or spatial relationships in Samoan mythology and ideology. She has investigated hair, technology, Samoan *tatau* (tattoo), and the archives of her own medical files. Dion Fletcher employs porcupine quills, wampum belts, and her own menstrual blood to reveal the complexities of what defines a body physically and culturally. Reflecting on her Indigenous feminist body and neurodiverse mind, Dion Fletcher addresses the sociopolitical representations and implications of menstruation, reproduction, and the biological body.

In this chapter, I also suggest that intersectional narratives "co-habit," rather than "counter," art history. In reality, all these stories reside together; they just need to be told. The most notable examination of the co-habitation of art history among multiple identity categories is the journal article that inspired the title of this chapter. In "Decolonizing Art History," Catherine Grant and Dorothy Price asked art historians and curators to respond to a series of questions regarding their thoughts on the call to decolonize art history and to offer suggestions on how others might shake up the structure of art history as an academic discipline.[2] It is a sixty-page document, comprehensive and important for providing deep thinking and reflection on these topics by eminent professionals in the field. While all of this work is crucial, none of it delves into the interdependency between Indigenous art and disability art, even within the sixty-page series of interviews. The co-habitation of identity categories as it is held up against disability is rarely explored in art historical scholarship. By analyzing similarities and differences between the artists and their practices, I aim to contribute new discourse in three fields—disability studies, Indigenous studies, and art history—while building on the work of decolonizing art history, which already has a rich legacy of alternative voices that remind us there is no such thing as a canon.

In her essay, "Circle Unbroken: The Politics of Inclusion," disabled artist and author Aurora Levins Morales explains that it is no longer satisfying or useful for our minority subject positions to operate individually or to pretend that racism, sexism, ableism, sexual orientation, and class exist in a vacuum from one another. Levins Morales asserts that while it is important to unite over a common cause, this must not be done at the expense of all the other components of people's complex lives and identities. She suggests that "the theory we need to be developing is that which helps

us understand the relationships between our different and multifaceted lives, with all their specific struggles and resources. Rather than build unity through simplification, we must learn to embrace multiple rallying points and understand their inherent interdependence."[3] Levins Morales's call for a more interdependent examination of difference finds much resonance in disability studies. Numerous authors have written extensively on structures and ethics of care and how disabled lives—and all lives—are interdependent, particularly scholar Eva Feder Kittay, and artists such as Park McArthur, Carolyn Lazard, and Constantina Zavitsanos. Levins Morales's work is truly radical, for she disavows Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of "intersectionality" as a way to account for the multifaceted identities which we all carry with us as it suggests that these aspects of our identities cannot be separated. Instead, she states that a liberation theory will be more useful if it "address[es] the way systems of oppression and privilege saturate each other, are mutually necessary, [and] have no independent existence."[4] Her use of the word "saturate" is so powerful and full of potential that I am motivated to apply this language to the artwork being discussed in this essay. The words "saturation" and "co-inhabit" are useful, for they provide another angle from which to talk about the disruption of oppression.

Métis Canadian scholar, critic, and artist David Garneau has taken a special interest in the intersections between Indigenous studies and disability studies in contemporary art in recent years. In an essay on the work of non–visual artist Carmen Papalia, Garneau acknowledges that the benefit in bringing the minoritized worlds of Indigenous and disabled peoples together is that they find common ground and become allies.[5] He further states that what these minority populations have in common is a similar sense of time and relations with others, and a desire for slowing down.[6] This goes against the efficacious nature of colonial infrastructures that rely on so-called normal bodies to labor under capitalist conditions of efficiency and productivity standards. "Crip time" and "interdependency" are vastly important concepts within the disabled community. As Garneau explains, "What Indigenous and disabled persons offer is an older and expanded sense of humanity. It's less in a hurry. Both privilege visiting. Both prioritize relations, not just between people but also with all the beings around us, and seek to experience the world through our knowing subjectivities more than through the social codes that shape our perceptions."[7] Garneau's observations are

profound and can be directly applied to the work of Brown and Dion Fletcher, as both artists are drawing on their Indigenous and disabled conceptions of time, spatial relations, and knowing subjectivities and language in an effort to unravel—or at least step away from—burdensome colonial constructions. I appreciate the work that Garneau has begun in thinking and writing about how two minority identity categories might find commonalities in order to build a coalition towards even greater measures of social justice.

Pelenakeke Brown's work is ensconced within a dynamic backdrop of contemporary Oceanic and Pacific art.[8] Scholar Susan Cochrane has stated that offering a definition of contemporary Pacific art is actually quite challenging, given the diversity of practices across different parts of Oceania and the fact that artists are using a combination of traditional and introduced new media.[9] Along with this, old-fashioned problematic conceptions of primitivism and authenticity still drive Western art history's scholarship of Oceanic and Pacific art, art collections, and the art market, which also makes establishing a definition of contemporary Pacific art difficult. Garneau believes that the commercial gears of the art market are one of the main reasons why decent art criticism on Indigenous art remains lacking. In other words, if "authentic" Indigenous art is viewed through the same lens as any other art object, it will be stripped of its value as separate, and therefore unique, from other Western products with lesser value.[10] Scholar Jacquelyn Lewis-Harris has asked what criteria should be used to judge contemporary Oceanic art (and work from Papua New Guinea specifically), because she believes that Oceanic objects do not fit neatly into Western, art historical, anthropological, or even Indigenous notions of art, which makes them "intellectually contentious."[11] My feeling is that this is, in fact, what makes contemporary Pacific art so interesting, freed from the constraints of art history's tendencies to define and categorize. Furthermore, the work lends itself to a quality of saturation, where one medium bleeds into another. I also want to say that this quality does not diminish the power of an identifiable Oceanic or Pacific art; rather, there is a coalition of recognizable iconographies. I am particularly grateful for major art world events like the Asia Pacific Triennial (APT) in Queensland, Australia, which has become a landmark event for recognizing art from the Asia Pacific region made since the 1990s. Cochrane believes that the APT "has removed the blinkers of Western art history," established that

art is indeed global, and recognized that there is no center against which to judge all art that falls outside those perimeters.[12] All of this work is encouraging: this includes a large survey exhibition entitled *Oceania* at the Royal Academy of Arts, in London, in 2018, and a book entitled *Refocusing Ethnographic Museums Through Oceanic Lenses* (2020) which gives credence to Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies in museum permanent collections of Oceanic art. Despite this, I have not yet encountered any dialogue around disability and art practices in Oceanic and Pacific cultures apart from the work by Pelenakeke Brown.

Like Brown's work in Aotearoa New Zealand, Dion Fletcher's artistic practice is nestled within an active and prominent Indigenous art scene in Canada, one in which I had the privilege to work for a number of years when I was a director/curator of a small gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan, called the Dunlop Art Gallery, housed inside the Regina Public Library. Just as I was able to follow the leadership of gallery administrators in my birthplace of Wollongong, Australia, regarding the role that local museums can and should play in advocating and promoting the artistic work of Indigenous communities, so too did my time in Regina gift me with wonderful mentors and passionate educators who instilled in me the responsibility to be responsive to the local Indigenous populations that surrounded me. It was here, in fact, that I met Garneau. Canada has an impressive roster of Indigenous artists, curators, art historians, and critics. All of these luminaries are politically engaged with acts of decolonization in their practice. Similar to Oceanic communities, there are numerous Indigenous communities in Canada with disparate identities, who are joined by their experiences of colonization, acts of violence, and the eradication of their peoples, traditions, and customs. The major Indigenous communities include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, groups which comprise four percent of Canada's overall population. There have been several major survey exhibitions of Indigenous contemporary art in Canada curated by Indigenous people, and I have followed, incorporated, and worked with a number of these artists and curators over the years. I believe they provide astounding leadership in establishing Indigenous consciousness and partnerships with museums, galleries, and educational institutions across Canada and the world. However, as with the scholarship in Aotearoa New Zealand, there appears to be little scholarship

exploring the intersections between disability and Indigenous intersectional identities in contemporary art practices.

Pelenakeke Brown: Choreography of the Typed *Tatau*

Pelenakeke Brown, or Keke, as she is known, is a multidisciplinary artist who explores her disabled Oceanic intersectional identity through drawing, writing, storytelling, and movement. She was diagnosed with cerebral palsy as a child, which predominantly affects the right side of her body. Brown's Samoan descent is inherited from her mother's side. She uses the Samoan concept of *vā* to inform her practice. *Vā* is a term used in Samoa to describe spatial relationships or in-between spaces and the way society is organized. Brown applies this concept to her art practice by interrogating relationships, specifically how we relate to each other and the world from both a micro and macro perspective. Relationships can also exist between humans and structures of power, and in Brown's case she chooses to interrogate the medical industry. Questions and ideas that inform Brown's art practice listed on her website include: "How can disability be seen as artistry? How can values and tenets of disability and care be part of my disability aesthetic? Where can I find overlapping sites of knowledge? How does this work honor crip time and the vā? What sites of choreography and movement can I find in everyday objects/movement? Whose story am I telling? And whose is not being said?"[13] Just as I aim to find sites of knowledge-building across minority identity categories that are typically theorized within a silo, Brown is intrigued by what she calls "overlaps within my identities, with how Indigenous ways of seeing, being and time can and does, overlap with crip time."[14] Brown has already done the work of recognizing an immediate connection between her Indigenous and disabled identities through the concept of time.

Building on this, Brown's dexterous movements on a keyboard are framed within "crip time," as it allows her to make slower, smaller movements which are more accessible to her physically, owing to her cerebral palsy. Slow movement—which one would argue is very much the nature of immigration movement itself, given the many barriers and hurdles immigrants may face in their journey, including economic,

financial, sociocultural, and environmental hardship—has long been embedded in the concept of "crip time" in disability studies. Crip time has been theorized by a number of disability studies scholars, most notably Alison Kafer, in her book *Feminist Queer Crip*. In her chapter "Time for Disability Studies and a Future for Crips," she defines "crip time" as a slower speed of movement, but also notes that the "ableist barriers [caused by the built environment that was created without the disabled body in mind] over which one has little to no control; in either case, crip time involves an awareness that disabled people might need more time to accomplish something or to arrive somewhere."[15] Brown is thus bridging her identities through methodology and praxis, using the keyboard as an accessible and achievable physical medium in "crip time," to produce powerful artwork that appropriates symbolism from her Samoan diasporic heritage. Brown spends a large portion of her time at home, and the keyboard and the internet are major pathways for allowing her to produce artwork. As stated on the Lutte Collective website, which is dedicated to the work of disabled and chronically ill artists, "the keyboard becomes a crossover site that embodies the multiplicity of her many identities, as well as becoming a tool for freedom and creativity of expression."[16]

In two recent bodies of work from 2019, *Crossings* and *A Travelling Practice* (Figure 8.1), Brown produced a series of works containing computer-generated text inputted on a conventional computer keyboard. The textual output is unconventional in that the text has been used as markers for delineating a pattern on a sheet of paper, rather than a standard series of words, sentences, or paragraphs for reading from left to right. The overall patterns are attempting to convey the shape and likeness of a tattoo, or Samoan *tatau*. If one looks in detail at the markings, one can see that Brown has used the punctuation, mathematical characters, and symbols on the keys of the keyboard, including the colon, semicolon, hyphen or dash, em dash, the number sign, ellipsis, quotation marks, asterisk, greater than/lesser than, forward slash, and backwards slash (known as solidus or reverse solidus), to form the patterns that imitate the look of a *tatau*. Brown has remarked that upon starting to closely examine these keys in her everyday use of the keyboard, it dawned on her that they resembled symbols of the Samoan *tatau*, especially the *malu*, which is the *tatau* worn by women. She says, "I was fascinated to see that in this modern technology there is ancestral knowledge in plain sight."[17] In the same artist statement, she continues to say that the *tatau* is still a very

important part of Samoan culture today and a marker of identity and a sense of place in communities of the Samoan diaspora. Tattoos such as the ones that Brown has evoked are familiar, given the ubiquity of tattoos around the world as bodily adornment in popular culture.

Figure 8.1 Pelenakeke Brown, *Crossings*, 2019, two giclée prints, each 14 × 11 inches.

The tattoo remains an important visual reference point for discussion in art history textbooks of Oceanic art, given the historical and contemporary usages of it by communities of both men and women. Interestingly, the Samoan *tatau* outlasted censorship during the period of colonization and missionary practices during the nineteenth century; one might argue that the contemporary presence of the tattoo has the political adage of survival, too, for its people and the practice itself.[18] Samoan poet and writer Albert Wendt talks about how the *tatau* refused to die even though colonialism meant that it was threatened by extinction and erasure. He says, "Tatau became defiant texts/scripts of nationalism and identity."[19] The rite of passage of receiving the tattoo is just as important as the tattoo itself. In the process of making the

tattoo permanent on the skin, one must grapple with a great deal of pain and blood, so the fleshy imprint then becomes an outward sign of bravery and strength. The *tatau* comes with knowledge that is passed through families from generation to generation, bearing stories in rituals and ceremonies specific to Samoan culture. At the same time, this art form continues to evolve as it is disseminated and appropriated by artists such as Brown. The *tatau* both distinguishes and sets apart Samoan bodies while also declaring belongingness to a group. Brown wanted to create these *tatau* markings using her keyboard as a way to connect or establish a crossing between race, disability, immigration, decolonization, and aesthetics. In "Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body," Albert Wendt writes,

> So tatauing is part of everything else that is the people, the aiga, the village, the community, the environment, the atua, the cosmos. It is a way of life that relates the tufuga ta tatau to the person being tataued and their community and history and beliefs to do with service, courage, masculinity, femininity, gender, identity, sexuality, beauty, symmetry, balance, aptness, and other art forms and the future because a tatau or a malu is for the rest of your life and when you die your children will inherit its reputation and stories, your stories, stories about you and your relationships. The tatau and the malu are not just beautiful decoration, they are scripts/texts/testimonies to do with relationships, order, form and so on.[20]

Given the *tatau*'s literal movement as traced through the bodies of the Samoan diaspora and their immigration to the many islands in the Pacific, especially Aotearoa New Zealand, Brown has adopted the idea of the *tatau* as a "traveling practice," a concept developed by artist, scholar and *tatau* practitioner Tyla Vaeau Ta'ufo'ou. As Brown typed out the *tatau* with the characters on the keyboard, using only her right hand due to her cerebral palsy, I believe that she was imagining this as a type of metaphor or micro-journey for larger diasporic movement. While composing, the artist asks, can one connect to historically traveling communities through the choreography of the utilitarian keyboard? Furthermore, the tapping of Brown's fingers on the keys imitates the rapid tapping action when *tatauing*, where the electronic needle injects ink into

the skin. Is typing on a keyboard a shared choreography with the striking of the *tatau* practitioner? Brown was also interested in how the movements of the *tatau* needle on a layer of the epidermis would look and feel, vis-à-vis the striking of the keyboard with one hand, in a bid to understand the Samoan *tatau* using the language of modern technology. What is so compelling about these ideas is that the word *tatau* comprises two meanings: "ta" means to strike (from the rapid taps of the act of tatauing), and "tau" means to fight, to reach the end, or to moor the boat or canoe after a journey. The etymology of the word encompasses both the micro and macro movement of fingers and fully embodied journeys across oceans. Moreover, the word *tatau* can also, appropriately, mean to be wrung out from the pain and the blood.[21]

Another means in which Indigenous and disabled communities find a point of connection in Brown's works is within spatial and familial relations. As discussed in the Introduction, concepts of time and space are points at which the two minority identity categories overlap in their approaches to body-mind relations. Brown's typed *tatau* renderings in this chapter capture concepts of time, both metaphorically, through movements of Samoan diaspora, and physically, through slowly tapping keys on a keyboard as an integral tool for connecting the artist to her art practice on "crip time." Spatial relations can also be brought into the mix. Brown has been guided by the concept of the *vā* in her art practice. *Vā* means relationships, and in Samoan culture, it is critical to cherish, nurse, and care for relationships because the extended family unit is more valuable than the individual. In fact, in traditional communal cultures the individual person, creature, or thing is the group.[22] The *tatau* connects to the concept of the *vā* because the *tatau* binds the community with their stories, myths, and legends. It is a visual script of these ancestral relations to be used as a guide for how one navigates these community relations today.

All of this is reflected in disability studies and its emphasis on the necessity of interdependency and networks of care. This rubs up against the virtues of both capitalism and colonialism, where individualism is prized more prominently than interdependency. Eva Feder Kittay has theorized an ethics of care for people with disabilities that sheds the reductive notion of assistance as a burden or limitation, and instead considers it as a resource. She argues that dependency is inevitable and helps to ultimately achieve autonomy and a fulfilling life for both the caregiver and the care-

partner.[23] The points of connection across Indigenous and disabled communities are profound here, where both minority peoples not only acknowledge the importance of the group but argue that its formation is critical to their very way of life. *Vā* and interdependency work along parallel lines, especially considering that relationships within disability are not just about the hardware—the audio descriptions, the braille, the touch tours, or even the keyboards. They are about mutual care and radical empathy within the human relations of the *vā*, anticipating each other's needs without asking for them. In sum, Brown's work in appropriating the *tatau* offers her a rich template in which to explore her multiple identities, which simultaneously straddle tradition and contemporaneity and successfully allow her audience to contemplate how these spheres can come together for deep provocation.

Vanessa Dion Fletcher: Fluency of Beaded Quillwork

In Vanessa Dion Fletcher's *Zigzag in Twenty Nine Parts* (2019), the artist demonstrates an appreciation for repetition using both established and completely new patterns of quillwork (Figures 8.2 and 8.3).[24] This series of quillwork discussed in this chapter was included in a solo exhibition entitled *Curiosity and Quillwork* held at the Ontario College of Art and Design as part of Dion Fletcher's six-month artist residency in 2019. Quillwork has many evocative connections with the art of *tatau*, especially the idea that both of these ancient practices have survived hardship through the threat of colonization and extinction. In its traditional application, quillwork is the art of using dyed porcupine quills to decorate items such as buckskin clothing, birchbark boxes, medicine bundles, drums, tipi covers, and moccasins. For centuries, quillwork has been an important textile and craftwork practice that connects communities, families, and individuals within Indigenous populations. The quillwork that Dion Fletcher has applied to the twenty-nine framed works on paper is quite different from traditional quillwork. Her application method more closely resembles that used in beading. Here, Dion Fletcher has used various colored dyes, including brown, green, red, and yellow, on the quills to create new patterns on the surface of the white paper in an attempt to connect to her ancestors and reclaim her Indigenous culture. In one left-hand image of

Zigzag in Twenty Nine Parts, a swirling, lasso-like reptilian line of brown and red quills snakes down over the top of the page, one stray quill rebelliously poking out from the fold as if to reveal its naked form. If one leans in and looks very closely, one can see the tiny black-headed barb on the end of the quill, about four millimeters along the end of the tip. This is the sharpest part of the quill, which porcupines use as a defense mechanism against natural predators. In traditional quillwork on clothing, the barbs are tucked away behind the main stem of the quills for a neater and smoother appearance and to protect both the flesh of its wearer and the material from which it is sewn. Hiding the barbs also makes the clothing more functional. Dion Fletcher plays with the barb feature of the quill to expose the raw material of her patterning and to reveal her artistic process. She also reminds us that while her unique designs are beautiful and aesthetically pleasing, there is an element of risk and danger attached to what are actually large stiff hairs. If the barb is poked into human flesh, it will immediately draw blood. The red and brown quills poke up from the bottom of the page and are shaped to look like a branch or twig with leaves fanning out from each side and above. The barbs are visible once again on the ends of what appear at first to be the innocuous branches of what resembles a make-shift tree. Both *tatau* and quillwork retain deep within them energetic origins of fighting and protecting: as discussed in the previous section, the etymology of the word *tatau* is to fight, while the quills and the barbs are critical components to the porcupine's defensive armor.

Figure 8.2 Vanessa Dion Fletcher, *Even Squiggle*. 2020. Porcupine quills, natural dye, and thread on paper. 6 × 9 inches.

Source: Permission of the artist.

Zigzag in Twenty Nine Parts displays the artist's curiosity as well as the care and respect with which she approaches quillwork. By bringing quillwork into her contemporary art practice, Dion Fletcher aims to build sovereignty and recognition of this tradition. Dion Fletcher has stated that she had extremely limited contact with her Indigenous elders and was never taught the Indigenous spoken language. She has thus felt removed from this part of her identity and is attempting to bridge this separation by activating Indigenous knowledge through this ancient creative practice of quillwork. She came into contact with the quillwork medium after she completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at York University in Toronto, during which she researched information about her ancestral artistic practice. She received mentorship and instruction on quillwork from Cree artist and educator Brenda Lee in her studio in Nipissing First Nation, Ontario. The labor involved in quillwork is painstaking, as it is highly detailed, meticulous, repetitive, and time-consuming. This recalls Pelenakeke Brown's act of typing on the keyboard with one hand, punching out the characters in order to evoke the pattern of *tatau*. The artists have engaged in these labor-intensive activities as an homage to ancestors and through this, they are able to be closer to their cultural roots. Pain, it seems, is a ritualistic prerequisite for these engagements, along with the already-mentioned act of drawing blood when sharp needle-like tools come into contact with skin. It is also notable that both artists generate these traditional Indigenous forms onto paper, appropriating them in a contemporary visual language that is accessible to the general public.

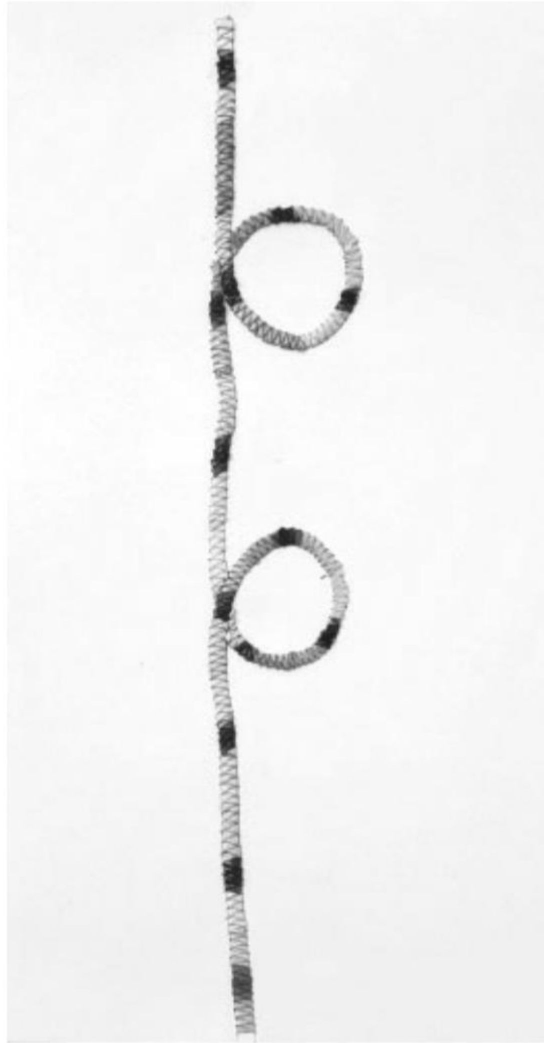

Figure 8.3 Vanessa Dion Fletcher, *Loop Loop*, 2020. Porcupine quills, natural dye, and thread on paper. 6 × 9 inches.

Source: Permission of the artist.

Language is key here, because quillwork is a visual language that is most accessible to Dion Fletcher too. One might even say that the artist has become fluent in it. As mentioned, Dion Fletcher was not raised with access to her native ancestral spoken and written language, so this form of creative expression helps her to achieve connection with her past. In a presentation on her practice at the Doris McCarthy Gallery at the University of Toronto Scarborough in early 2019, she told the audience how her grandmother's relatives attended residential schools where they were not allowed to speak Lenape.[25] The only time her grandmother would hear her Native language was at night, when she was in bed trying to fall asleep, and she could hear her relatives talking in another room. She recalls that her parents sang in Lenape while weaving baskets. She heard Lenape only while falling asleep because speaking in Lenape was not seen as positive. In Canada, speaking in Native languages was seen as negative because it was perceived that it would not help Native people in life, and so people would not expose their children to their Native languages. There was also government surveillance of the language in artistic practice, so the only time they could speak safely was at night at home. Like her grandmother, Dion Fletcher grew up not hearing Lenape, but she had her mother and her aunt who taught her what it means to be an Indigenous woman, a Lenape Potawatomi. These women had a number of things working against them, in terms of teaching their children what it means to have a cultural presence. Government surveillance included a government-issued identity card that specifies Indigenous status. In other words, the Canadian government defines you outside of how you might personally identify, in terms of your heritage, your community, and your ancestors. Dion Fletcher remarked that this is a very strange thing. The artist also has a learning disability caused by a lack of short-term memory. This has meant that navigating the English language has been challenging for her and therefore limiting with regard to her means of self-expression. Through the visual language of quillwork, Dion Fletcher is returning to Indigenous teachings that are uninhibited by rhetorical colonial language (English). Quillwork is also an accessible practice for the artist, as it does not rely on the spoken language of Lenape, which remains elusive to her across her saturated Indigenous/disabled identity.

Comparing this body of work to Brown's typed *tatau* prints reveals important insights into Indigenous/disabled saturation and co-habitation. Brown and Dion

Fletcher are considering ancestral creative practices from similar multifaceted identity subject positions. Both artists express great interest in visceral bodily fluid, namely blood, through the rapid motion of the *tatau* needle in Brown's series, or the prick of the finger from the barb of the porcupine quill in Dion Fletcher's quillwork. Images of blood are suggested by looking at the repetitive patterns in both bodies of work. Their art allows everyone to bear witness to ancient bodily practices appropriated in contemporary forms. Dion Fletcher's choice of medium—her language—as part of her radical accessibility practice connects powerfully to Brown's choice to wield her keyboard as a drawing pen in which to ink paper within an environment that is comfortable for her. While these artists do not know each other, their work conveys an understanding of the choices they make within their artistic practices. They must reckon with not only their desires to connect to their ancestral Indigenous creative knowledge but also with the very tools they utilize in order to physically and neurologically access art-making itself. The work of Brown and Dion Fletcher powerfully showcases how interdependency works nimbly between and across multiple "rallying points" of disability and indigeneity. In these ways, their work clearly breaks the silo of single-oppression theory discussed by Levins Morales. It is not that one identity takes precedence over another, or that they are separate. Nor is it that one identity category comes first or last, or that one identity is dominant, while the other is a crutch. Instead, both identities are fully saturated, blended, and interdependent, as the works could not be made without the ingenious and generative creative approaches to art-making informed by the artists' disabilities. These appropriated ancestral practices would not be where they are in the hands of these artists without generations of Indigenous knowledge passed down to them through mothers, grandmothers, and other female elders across Native lands.

Conclusion

Examination of the work of Pelenakeke Brown and Vanessa Dion Fletcher reveals that these artists are similar in their approaches, their desires, and their need to build a connection to their roots. It also demonstrates that art-making is clearly a pathway

to understanding identity, and a way to keep precolonial legacies alive that may once have been threatened by extinction. More work needs to be done by art historians in writing about this new generation of younger artists who are reviving Indigenous forms of knowledge and praxis in beautiful, politicized, and unexpected ways. Through documentation of such work, art historical scholarship can begin to incorporate these practices alongside "canonical" subject matter to reinforce the real and vital presence of art history's co-inhabitants, making it not only difficult but impossible for us to ignore. As we continue the work of decolonizing our syllabi, our textbooks, our museums and their collections, our guest artist speakers, our audiovisual materials, our field trips, and our exhibitions, it is critical that the interdependent, saturated voices of feminist, Indigenous, and disabled bodies hold a place and occupy space.

Notes

1. I am using both the Māori and English names – Aotearoa New Zealand –here as this is how Pelenakeke Brown refers to her country of residence.
2. Catherine Grant and Dorothy Price, "Decolonizing Art History," *Art History* 43, no. 1 (2020): 8–66, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8365.12490, interview with David A. Bailey.
3. Aurora Levins Morales, "Circle Unbroken: The Politics of Inclusion," in *Medicine Stories: Essays for Radicals* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 212.
4. Ibid., 213.
5. David Garneau, "Carmen Papalia Is a Non," unpublished personal email correspondence with author (July 20, 2020).
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. For a great overview, see Caroline Vercoe, "Art Niu Sila: Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand," in *Pacific Art Niu Sila: The Pacific Dimension of Contemporary New Zealand Arts*, ed. Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira (Wellington, New Zealand: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Te Papa Press, 2002), 191–207.
9. Susan Cochrane, "Art in the Contemporary Pacific," *Junctures: The Journal of Thematic Dialogue* 17 (2016): 78–95.

10. David Garneau, "Indigenous Art: From Appreciation to Art Criticism," in *Double Desire: Transculturation and Indigenous Contemporary Art*, ed. Ian McLean (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 311–26.
11. Jacquelyn Lewis-Harris, "Gender, Location, and Tradition: A Comparison of Two Papua New Guinean Artists," *Visual Anthropology* 17, no. 3–4 (2004): 273.
12. Cochrane, "Art in the Contemporary Pacific," 93.
13. Pelenakeke Brown artist statement, accessed July 16, 2020, www.kekebrown.com/about.
14. Ibid.
15. Alison Kafer, *Feminist Queer Crip* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 26.
16. Hayley Cranberry Small, "September Featured Artist: Pelenakeke Brown," *Lutte Collective: A Space for Disabled & Chronically Ill Artists*, accessed July 21, 2020, https://luttecollective.com/post/187421200237/september-featured-artist-pelenakeke-brown.
17. Pelenakeke Brown, "Provocation," artist statement provided by the artist to the author, May 5, 2020.
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