P.1. George Morrison, *Collage IX: Landscape*, 1974, wood, 60 ⅛ × 168 ½ × 3 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Francis E. Andrews Fund, 75.24. Reprinted courtesy of Briand Morrison.

Prologue

Collage: Landscape

In 1965, George Morrison started making landscapes out of driftwood. He gathered wood from Atlantic beaches near Provincetown, Massachusetts, where he rented a studio on breaks from teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design. He looked for scraps of wood grayed and weathered by the sea to the brink of abstraction, but that also bore some trace of human use or attachment ("bits of paint, half worn off," "rust stains or colors soaked in," "the top of an old scrub brush").[1] Morrison began each landscape, which he also called "wood collages" and "paintings in wood," by fitting together a few pieces in the bottom left corner of the frame that, along the broken lines of driftwood edges, gathered out into massive sweeps and rivulets of fragments to fill frames up to fourteen feet wide and five feet tall. Setting off the top quadrant of each collage, a single, twisted but unbroken line—a horizon line—is the only gesture spared from the turbulence of fracture and motion that characterizes the landscapes.

Morrison was born in 1919, in a house near the shore of Lake Superior, a member of the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.[2] He was sent to a boarding school in Wisconsin, attended and graduated from the Minneapolis School of Art, and in 1944 moved to New York, where he made and showed work alongside Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Joan Mitchell, Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, and Franz Kline. During the years he lived on the East Coast, Morrison was excluded from exhibitions of "Indian art" that were coming into fashion in the US art market. In 1948, the Philbrook Art Center in Tulsa rejected his work, noting that it "was not painted in the traditional manner of your forefathers." And even when the Philbrook

eventually did accept Morrison's work in 1964, the curator wrote to Morrison that she "was aware that [Morrison was] . . . not an artist in the 'Indian style.'"[3] Although this question of whether his work belonged in the category "Indian art" did not preoccupy Morrison, it is one that continues to dominate criticism of his work.[4] One reason, perhaps, is that Morrison began making driftwood landscapes just as he decided to move back to Minnesota in 1970 to join the faculty of the country's first American Indian studies program at the University of Minnesota, a move, he wrote, that was inspired by an "Indian connection . . . [and] the need to put certain Indian values into my work."[5] His move to the Twin Cities (Minneapolis/St. Paul), for which the driftwood landscapes became an avatar, is often interpreted as a pivot from an abstract period to a politically and ideologically situated one—a homecoming that structures a narrative of development in the life of a path-making Indigenous modernist.

Questions about the Indigenousness of art often displace questions about the Indigenousness of the places where that art is made and shown. It is a critical habit that has unfortunately structured much of the history of the interpretation of Morrison's work. Writing against that habit is one reason I wanted to write this book, to ask: How can we read art and place together under conditions of ongoing colonialism? Can practices of cultural interpretation denaturalize the coloniality of place and at the same time show how Indigenous art-making is always also Indigenous place-making? While these questions motivated this book, it is still important to me that the book not be mistaken as an attempt to resolve them. Therefore, before I turn to the central arguments and archives in the introduction, I want to use this prologue to stage these questions—not to answer them but to hold them open. This prologue is an experiment in writing the politics of art, Indigeneity, and land together that I hope will also function as an invitation for others to join in the urgent decolonial work of continually rewriting the entangled histories of place- and art-making to which each of us is connected.

Extraction and Cultural Interpretation

When Morrison returned in 1970, the Twin Cities seemed to be remaking itself. A city whose political and economic life had always centered the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers and the milling industries those rivers powered, was emptying itself into suburbs. Strategically devalued Black, Brown, and Indigenous neighborhoods were obliterated by a new interstate system as the

manufacturing jobs on which those neighborhoods economically depended were replaced by the rise of a finance and retail economy increasingly situated in the suburbs. The Twin Cities' transformation is a familiar story of "urban crisis" in the United States, but one that hinged in more immediately identifiable ways than it did in other US cities on the unresolved contradiction of the social and jurisdictional form of the city that depends on the recurrent displacement and absorption of Indigenous people and land relations. In the 1960s and 1970s, the contradictions of Indigenous displacement and absorption was most famously manifest in the rise of the American Indian Movement.[6] Like other urban anti-racist and decolonization movements, AIM demanded equal access to employment, health care, safety, and education. What distinguished AIM's insurgency, from Alcatraz Island to the National Mall in Washington, DC, was the way it used occupation as a style of protest in order to denaturalize the settler city as a primary or coherent social and jurisdictional form. In one sense, the history of that denaturalization begins in the Twin Cities, where AIM started as a cop watch system, a street patrol, two Indigenous schools, and a local health care and legal support system before it became a national organization.

Only a few months after Morrison arrived in Minnesota, AIM occupied the Naval Air Station in Minneapolis: an unused military facility associated with Fort Snelling, the original colonial installation in Minnesota situated on a Dakota sacred site and adjacent to Wita Tanka, or "Pike Island," where thousands of Dakota people were held in a concentration camp in 1862. Like the concurrent occupation of Alcatraz, the Naval Air Station occupation was premised on a common provision of US treaties (in this case, the 1805 Treaty of St. Peter) that afforded for the return of unused federal land to Indigenous people. AIM demanded that the Naval Air Station be redeveloped as an Indigenous school, a demand that city and federal officials immediately rejected.[7] However the broader effect of AIM occupations like this one was to demonstrate the spatial and historical incoherence of the jurisdictional form of the settler city itself, to indicate its internal and irreparable broken edges, and to insist that those edges—never the spaces of vacancy or pathology the city made them out to be—were sites of abiding political motion.

As soon as Morrison arrived in the Twin Cities, he became an active member of AIM. At the same time, his driftwood landscapes were embraced by the cities' most powerful settler corporations and cultural institutions. He sold driftwood collages to the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA), General Mills, Honeywell, and Prudential—all organizations whose wealth depended on the seizure and extraction of Indigenous life and land.[8] He had a solo show

at the Walker Art Center, a gallery named and funded by lumber baron T. H. Walker, and received public art commissions for a wood statue exhibited in a skyscraper named for the French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, and a granite collage built into a pedestrian mall named for Jean Nicolet, the French explorer sometimes credited with "discovering" the Great Lakes. How these corporations and institutions misread Morrison's work, and why they were interested in using that work to attach themselves to a narrative of the frontier past and neoliberal future of US colonialism, gets to questions at the heart of this book about how colonialism attempts and fails to control the meaning of art, about how colonial political and aesthetic forms are produced by the management of belonging, and about how we can clarify the always-material, always-ecological stakes of struggles around aesthetics and power, colonialism and decolonization. At a moment characterized both by insurgent assertions of urban Indigenous space and by systematic disinvestment from the cities' central Black and Indigenous neighborhoods, settler corporations and institutions leveraged a particular and violently constrained idea of the "Nativeness" of Morrison's art to facilitate a transformation of the spatial and economic order of the city. Here, Nativeness was not understood as a radical counterclaim to the operation of US colonialism but rather as a minority cultural aspect of it. I argue that, as such, colonial institutions misinterpreted Morrison's work and its relation to modern Indigeneity by obscuring the aesthetic and political invention to which that work was actively committed.

The first landscape Morrison sold after moving back to Minnesota is titled *Collage IX: Landscape*. The piece is made of driftwood that he brought from the Atlantic coast, and that he collected from the "alleys and backyards" of his neighborhood in St. Paul.[9] Like all of his collages, it is a study of material in social and historical relation. Morrison immersed himself in the process ("the chance element") of "taking driftwood or discarded wood and playing one piece against the other."[10] The patterns of "color, shape, and texture" that emerge are functions of Morrison's own manipulation and of the possibilities or limits of attachment manifest in each piece. Those patterns are ornate, massive, and mutating, and they express within the piece's huge frame a multidimensionality of motion beyond the vertical and horizontal, a coruscation of density, gesture, and reference. The complexity of this effect is intentional and has to do with how the wood pieces-in-pattern express a present of exposition and, like a shoreline, gather the residue of moving histories of growth, harvest, commodification, shipment, use, and disposal that mingle below and beyond that present. For Morrison, those histories were insistently environmental

and social, and they generate an animating tension that never resolves into familiar postures of presence or absence, location or loss.

Collage, for Morrison, is both a response to the formal operation of colonial extraction and a practice of ecological invention. In a formal sense, Morrison's interest in collage is plainly unrecuperative. The pieces of driftwood he used are not joined to represent or restore what of them was lost to extraction, and in this sense *collage* does not refer to a total effect of fragments rearranged into pattern. In Morrison's work, collage is better understood as attention to the formal and affective generativity of wood worn—in odd angles and unnatural lightness, and in subtly incurvate or arching sanded surfaces—to extractive remains. It is a practice that collects both wood arrayed in a fluid pattern and the interstitial spaces between each piece, and thereby creates a formal tension between what, of each piece of driftwood, it is and is not possible to connect. Morrison remembered the history that preceded the wood's inclusion in the collage ("There was an interesting history in those pieces—who had touched them, where they had come from") and its eventual decay ("The wood won't last forever, I know that").[11] Thus we can read the gaps between driftwood pieces as a space not of loss but of organic exchange—where, within the collage, the pieces literally gather and decay together.

If, for Morrison, collage is a way of gathering with and among the absent, the other primary formal framework of the piece—landscape—is a rethinking of the sociality of setting. The term is one that Morrison hesitated around or qualified when he talked about the collages. "I think a respectful, knowledgeable person," he reflected, "would know that they're paintings in wood, landscapes."[12] Later, he added: "I imagine that people see the wood first. They don't look at it as a landscape painting, though it's subtitled *Landscape*. They may not even see the horizon line at first. The initial appeal comes from the wood itself, from the tactile surface."[13] In a colonial context, as W. J. T. Mitchell notes, landscape is "a medium" and a making, an enclosure fantasy. Landscape is the imagination of space primally unclaimed but through whose mixing of proximity and spaciousness property is remade as an effect of seeing, "'the dreamwork' of imperialism."[14] In Morrison's collage, these dynamics are referenced and actively thwarted. For Morrison, landscape is also a medium and is concerned with how art participates in the politics of space. But whereas imperial landscape derives a rhetoric of control out of a construction of spatial ideality ("the antithesis of 'land'"), Morrison's landscape problematizes interpretive control by revealing the generative indistinction between space and land. As he points out, the experience of observing the collage is one that frustrates the acquisitive choreography of spectacle: "They

don't look at it as a landscape." Rather, the force of the collage is affective. The piece draws the observer to it, to touch it, in "an appeal," as Morrison points out, that "comes from the wood itself." The effect, then, is not the abstraction of or from an idea of land but a feeling of being overcome by the materiality of land, even in the moment of observing the collage in the gallery. Morrison's landscape makes land and, as such, resets the terms of its encounter beyond interpretation, closer, perhaps, to something like the terms of relation.

The MIA purchased *Collage IX: Landscape* in 1975, the year after it completed a massive, $30 million expansion to its main building. Designed by the renowned Japanese architect Kenzo Tange, the addition was intended to modernize and expand the museum's founding democratic concept: a public exhibition space joined to an art school and a theater. As a part of that expansion, the museum updated its curatorial scheme, adding the department first called Primitive Art before it was renamed Art of Africa and the Americas, in which *Collage IX: Landscape* would be exhibited. The MIA is situated in a neighborhood that became the vibrant center of Indigenous life and organizing in Minneapolis in the aftermath of postwar white disinvestment. Originally, it was land seized from Dakota people in the mid-nineteenth century by settler John T. Blaisdell.[15] Blaisdell sold the lumber and eventually some of the land itself to Dorilus Morrison, a man who started the city's first industrial sawmill and eventually became Minneapolis's first mayor. Dorilus Morrison made a fortune milling lumber harvested from all over the state, including from thousands of acres of pine forest he bought himself—land that had been acquired through a treaty with Ojibwe leaders in 1837 whose terms (e.g., the provision of Ojibwe hunting and fishing rights) were never upheld by the United States.[16] In 1911, Dorilus Morrison's son, Clinton, donated the land the family bought from Blaisdell to Minneapolis for the construction of a museum whose founding principle, characteristic of early twentieth-century progressivism, was (in the words of its first director, Joseph Breck) to liberate the museum from the model of "'the storehouse' [or] . . . 'prison of arts'" and to "extend no less cordial a welcome to the humbler amateurs than . . . to 'carriage folk.'"[17]

Like the other corporations and institutions that acquired George Morrison's collage landscapes in the early 1970s, the MIA is an effect and a technology of extraction. Here and throughout this book, extraction is a cultural and an ecological concept; it signals both how forms of colonial belonging proliferate around Indigenous land dispossession and how those forms remake themselves through the management of ecological meaning. Thinking about the MIA through the lens of extraction is less about singling out

that institution—or even the institutional form of the museum—than it is about showing how colonial cultural forms that organize the politics of belonging function as thresholds of the constant transformations of land, capital, and power on which the broader operation of US colonialism depends. For instance, the museum's self-concept as a public institution is only possible through a recurrence of Indigenous alienation: of the land under the museum, of the trees and water through which Dorilus Morrison made a fortune, of the civic investment that city officials directed to a colonial museum in an Indigenous neighborhood instead of the Indigenous school that AIM asked to be installed on the abandoned naval air station. And each such recurrence elaborates its publicness in a particular way, as a derivative of what Dene scholar Glen Coulthard calls "persistent" colonial accumulation, as a primal symbol of colonial occupation (what Jean O'Brien calls "firsting"), and as a threshold from or into which Indigenous life can be categorically excluded or assimilated.[18] Thus the museum, like other colonial institutions, transforms multiple spatial, economic, and political operations of extraction into a differential experience of access. For those it reproduces as subjects of extraction, it makes access (to land, to capital, to the public, to knowledge of what is excluded from the public) available and ideologically defining. For the people and the ecological relations it reproduces as objects of extraction, it makes being available to access ontologically defining.

The MIA's acquisition of *Collage IX: Landscape* helped define Morrison as an Indigenous modernist for the art world and for the Twin Cities in part by exhibiting the piece in the Primitive Art and then Art of Africa and the Americas department. By curating the work in this way, the MIA used Morrison to institutionalize a relationship between modernity and Indigeneity that erases the specificity of Indigenous claims to land. In the shift from Primitive Art to Art of Africa and the Americas, the MIA replaced a violent temporal (anachronizing) universalization of Indigeneity with a spatial (globalizing) one—a tactic Joanne Barker terms the "racialization of the Indian," in which "the notion that indigenous peoples are members of sovereign political collectivities is made incomprehensible . . . [by] collaps[ing] indigenous peoples into minority groups that make up the rainbow of multicultural difference."[19] The fact that Morrison was a member of a tribal community whose expropriated land was the economic precondition for the MIA (itself also physically built on seized Dakota land) is transformed by a curatorial gesture that locates the museum in a global landscape of difference rather than evince the political contradictions of its spatial and temporal location. For Barker, "racialization" means replacing the treaty relationship between tribes and other nations

with a political minority status, theorized in the Marshall Trilogy as a condition of "wardship."[20] And as she and other Indigenous studies scholars have pointed out, that erasure is not singular but recurrent. It recurs whenever colonial structures are thrown into crisis, expand, or remake themselves, what Patrick Wolfe defines as the "structure not . . . event" of settler colonialism.[21] Barker's use of "racialization" in this context is comparative—in which Indigeneity stripped of its sovereign claim to land seems to make it comparable to positions of political minority already naturalized within US racial capitalism as landless and nonsovereign. However, the way colonial institutions used Morrison's collages at this moment of urban transformation invites an elaboration of this theory of racialization to understand how the colonial construction of modern Indigeneity as landless also served the intrinsically anti-Black discourse of civic revitalization.

In the aftermath of suburbanization, civic and business leaders invested in sites like the MIA and Nicollet Mall as spaces to return public interest to the downtown. In such spaces, Morrison's collage landscapes—works whose aesthetic interest in fragment and pattern were misconstrued as thematizing political unity from individual difference—were exhibited as avatars of a new urban, multicultural public life.[22] Here I am interested in how a discourse of the public "life" Morrison's collages were used to ornament operated in the city both metaphorically and literally on the level of biology and ecology. As in other gentrifying cities, Twin Cities officials relied heavily on metaphors of health (lifeblood, vitality, and growth) and damage (blight, disease, decay) to advertise and fundraise for investments like the MIA expansion and the Nicollet Mall renovation. As in other cities, that rhetoric was deployed on behalf of a revitalization that produced new forms and distributions of environmental violence outside of revalued urban spaces. Because expressed interest in renewed urban spaces was economic, revitalization in the Twin Cities depended on a classic neoliberal model of financing and governance. Remaking retail and cultural spaces "to bring life back to the street" depended on tax incentives and regulatory easements that concentrated profit around a few corporations and redistributed environmental vulnerability to poor and rural communities around the state and city.[23] Today the catastrophic toxification of the state's soil and water as a result of manufacturing, mining, and toxic dumping by companies like 3M and Honeywell—who directly invested in and benefited from the cities' revitalization—are only beginning to be understood.[24]

Within the cities themselves, the ecological logic of urban revitalization also depended on the "dysselection" of Black life as the governing concept of

public life.[25] That dysselection was literalized when white federal, state, and city officials routed the new interstate connecting Minneapolis and St. Paul (I-94) through the Rondo neighborhood—the largest and most cherished Black neighborhood in St. Paul.[26] The destruction of 650 Black homes and over 100 Black-owned businesses in the name of heightened cultural and economic exchange between Minneapolis and St. Paul concretized the necropolitical logic of the cities' public life. In the aftermath of the police murder of Philando Castile in 2016, anti-racist protesters trenchantly marked the legacy of this concept of public life by stopping traffic on I-94, exactly at the site where the Rondo neighborhood once stood.[27]

Writing against Resolution

This prologue is an attempt to think about a work of art and a city together, to track the ways they are connected by genealogies of life and space in motion. At the same time, it is an effort to avoid repeating the reduction of both art and the city to and by colonial practices of interpretation, valuation, and recovery—the way the meaning of Morrison's life, his work, and Indigenous people in Minnesota, for instance, have been managed through the cultural economies of extraction that I have outlined. In this sense, to think about art and place together is primarily an incitement to reading and writing differently. How do we think and write about—which is to say around or among—forms linked by moving histories of colonialism and decolonization, seizure and endurance, domination and repair?

In this book, I try to hold open the question of how to write about art and place together by attending to convergences of culture and power that do not resolve to ready formations of identity, jurisdiction, or discipline. I bookmark these convergences with the word *against*: an ambivalent term that signals the trenchant opposition to US colonialisms that characterizes all the texts I write about, and the inescapable sense of proximity—the spatial, ideological, and social friction—that is a condition of production of decolonial art and organizing. It is also a term that expresses key methodological features of Morrison's collages, including their attention to generative possibilities of the meager, fraught, and collapsing spaces where ideas and materials in proximity are transformed but never resolved.

Writing-against as a mode of collaboration with difference is also important to me, a non-Indigenous person writing about Indigenous land and art. In one sense, it marks a familiar, and perhaps facile, aspiration to conditional

alignment: that my writing can join the writing and organizing I describe in this book in opposing the legal, cultural, environmental, and political extraction that drives US colonialisms. But perhaps harder and more useful is the sense that this book is a challenge to account for the spatial, economic, and political proximity between the ideas and histories that have made me and the Indigenous land, people, and texts I consider here—a proximity uninvited by Ojibwe and Dakota people, and one structurally predisposed, as a function of colonialism, to my benefit. One reason to write this book is to ask if that proximity can mean something other than extraction, and that is also something other than resolution: if what can be made in that proximity can have meaning that does not just accrue to non-Indigenous people, and if what can be unmade are inherited ideological and disciplinary dispositions that understand proximity as something to be claimed or defended against.