

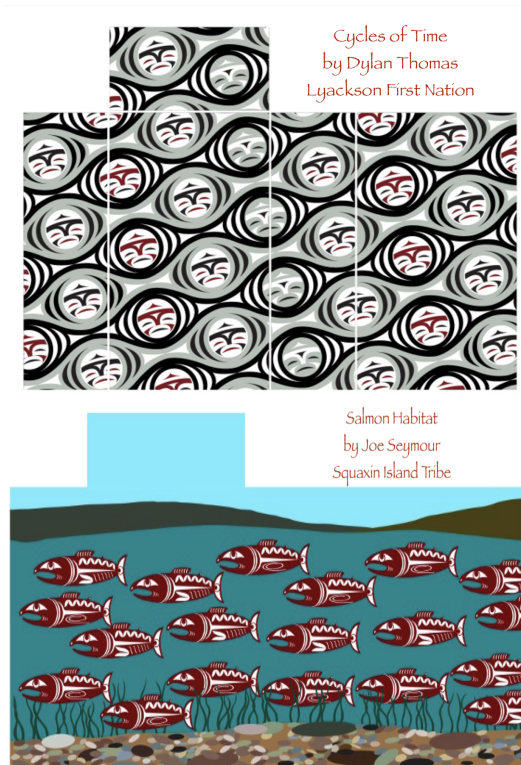
Willow Hoins
 Professor Tim Billo
 May 27th, 2022
 Final Project Part 2A

Art Outside the Box: A Pioneer Square Vignette

Art has long been used as a source of expression— the expression of human creative skill and imagination. It's a piece that makes audiences feel something, a work that says, *I'm here, look at me*. And it has a long-standing tradition in Pioneer Square, where it has been utilized for decades to confront the manipulated historical narratives of the Urban Native.

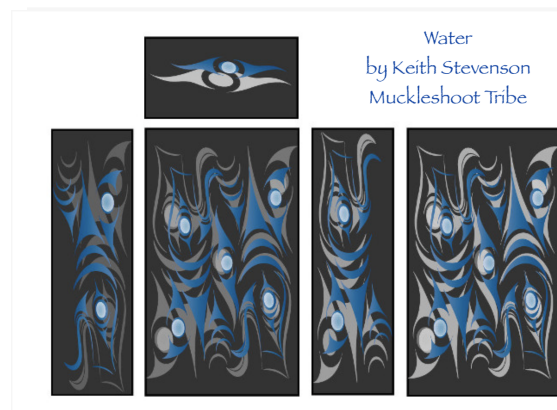
As early as the 1970s, Indigenous peoples documented their invisibility, expressing defiance towards the forced, indoctrinated role Indians had been relegated to play in Seattle's urban history.

The relationship between the Urban Indian and art within Pioneer Square has been a complicated one. On some days, the expressions of sketches, paintings, or poetry were the only means of being present, being visible within that “first community” of Seattle. Yet on others, Art removed the Native, erasing entire neighborhoods for the sake of creating art galleries and establishing urban renewal. Without a doubt, Pioneer Square was “Indian territory,” an urban neighborhood steeped in traditions, the Chief of All Women Totem Pole, and the bronze bust of Chief Sealth. However, this world was quickly institutionalized into evidence of past native peoples, writing over the presence of the still living Urban Indian in the name of renewal, historic preservation, and heritage tourism.¹ Seattlelites blurred the line between confronting the place-story of abuses against urban Indigenous peoples, and aesthetically victimizing civilizations. The streets of Pioneer Square had been turned into a cold museum, an Art Detention Center archiving the “fetishes” of a people that were not their own while effacing those very people who created these works.



¹ THRUSH, C. O. L. L. (2017). Urban Renewal in Indian Territory. In *Native Seattle: Histories from the crossing-over place* (pp. 172–181). essay, UNIV OF WASHINGTON Press.

Art Outside the Box, a community public art project sponsored by the Pioneer Square Resident's Council (PSRC) and Chief Seattle Club, works to rewrite this story– to correct it. The paintings on the Seattle Department of Transportation signal boxes honor the presence of *Our First Community* (the theme for the pieces), but they also work to honor the active and continual presence of the Urban Indian. With nearly every aspect of the project being checked and balanced by the over 4,000-member community within Pioneer Square,² the crowdsourced theme was chosen, and it was time to select the artists. PSRC reached out to several Coast Salish artists, ages ranging across generations, finalized by a jury of Native American art professionals, Indigenous Community Leaders, and Pioneer Square residents and business owners. Starting with just five boxes in 2018, there are now *eleven* contemporarily traditional pieces proudly representing the streets of Pioneer Square.³ Walking south on 1st Ave and Cherry St, you're greeted by the fishes, faces, generations, compassionate protectors, and waters of the indigenous artists Dylan Thomas– Lyackson First Nation, Joe Seymour– Squaxin Island Tribe, Denise Emerson– Skokomish Tribe, Rudy Romero– Nooksack/ Skyway, and Keith Stevenson– Muckleshoot Tribe. The resounding support and approval of the community spoke for itself, but people wanted to know more. They wanted to know the stories behind the pieces and the artists behind those stories. With the induction of walking tours⁴ alongside the artists, the art was no longer a memorialization of a story, but a dynamic, living, breathing culture.



² US Census Bureau , 2019 A. C. S. S. (2019). *Pioneer Square Demographics*. Point2. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/WA/Seattle/Pioneer-Square-Demographics.html>

³ Pioneer Square Resident's Council. (2021). *"Art Outside the Box" Public Art Project*. Pioneer Square Residents Council. Retrieved May 21, 2022, from <http://pioneersquare.us/outside-the-box/>

⁴ Original submission images for Selection Jury of Art Outside the Box by Thomas, Seymour, Romero, Stevenson, & Emerson; Added titles and their artists by Willow Hoins

It said I'm here, look at me, hear my story, and watch me grow.

Nestled on the south side of Jackson St, between 2nd and 3rd, lives Titus Capoeman's "Crab" of the Quinault Indian Nation. Watching the intricate red crabs dance among the vibrant turquoise sea brings to life the autumnal inspiration of the Quinault Crab Fisheries Community that hit the waters of Puget Sound each November to provide for their families. With a "life's purpose to bring peace, pride, and healing to communities and the public through the sharing of traditional interpretations of the history of tribal people and tribal art,"⁵ who better to aid the truth and healing of the Urban Indian in Pioneer Square? If you follow Capoeman to the southwest corner of 1st and Main, not only will you be greeted by the rising "Thunder Moon" of Ty Juvinel– Tulalip Tribe, but also the continued struggle of Coast Salish cultural heritage and how to represent past, present, and future Salish art. The PSRC encourages community and visitors to report the graffiti painted over the pieces; however, they want to continue to ask the question, "to what extent do they have the right to displace art?"⁶ Almost all of the tagging is rendered by houseless individuals living within the streets of Pioneer Square. Like the relationship with art, the historical relationship with housing remains just as complex. Art Outside the Box exists to correct the narrative, to acknowledge the displacement of the past and the existence of the present. But to ask to displace the people who can make their community "inconvenient" or "dangerous" feels too similar to the historical accounts of past Indigenous individuals. Hence, PSRC's acknowledgement of questioning which art is valid, and who has a right to decide that. So as you walk the Streets of 1st and Jackson, take in "Muckleshoot Springer" by Tyson Simmons– Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, "Salmon and Water" by Leslie Sam (LessLIE)– Cowichan Tribes Band, "Walking Bear" by Maynard Johnny Jr.– Penelakut



⁵ Capoeman, T. (2019). *Crab*. Pioneer Square Residents Council. Retrieved May 25, 2022, from <http://pioneersquare.us/crab/>

⁶ Volunteer at Pioneer Square Resident's Council, Interviewed by Willow Hoins for Honors 391 Part 2a Project, University of Washington, May 25th, 2022.

Tribe, and “Eagles in the Square” by Jason Read– Sechelt Indian Band, appreciate the delicate lines these artists and their communities tow as they work to heal and grow the neighborhood.