

Representing Indigeneity, Women, and Work

The historical archive has long included representations of Indigenous women, which were often captured to support settler colonialism and empire-building and which were informed by various iterations of racist ideologies and capitalist motivations. However, such representative forms, including works of literary fiction, painting, photography, film, dance, and other forms of performance, can also be reconsidered today through what Native Hawaiian feminist scholar Maile Arvin calls a strategy of “regenerative refusals,” which are “actions that seek to restore balance and life to indigenous communities that continue to live with the structures of settler colonialism.” In addition, creative practitioners of the present and the past offer Indigenous perspectives by and of women that challenge colonial legacies and engender possibilities for new stories and new connections within and across communities.

The “Representing Indigeneity, Women, and Work” project will host a one-day symposium on representations by and of women from Indigenous communities in relation to work. The symposium seeks to center the diverse ways in which women have represented themselves, or been represented, engaging with work across time periods and places, while also interrogating the concept of “work” itself through non-western critical lenses including Native Feminisms frameworks. The symposium will ideally coincide with a companion exhibition of a series of photographic glass slides of Hawai’i taken during the late-19th and early-20th centuries, which center the invisibilized labor/responsibilities of women in Hawai’i during the years before and after the U.S.’s illegal annexation of the Hawaiian Islands in 1898.

Coordinators

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