

A Poetic Invocation to Re-Imagination

In Celebration of the Grand Re-Opening of The Denver Art Museum's Martin Building

by Adrian H Molina

The maya understood the circle as a placeholder
for the universe. A circle of new life inspired by a fruit
now connects the titanium multi-quadrilateral succulent
to its renovated medieval castle: a modern marvel of design.
Let this embrace of spectacular shape and connection
be the driving force in the Denver Art Museum's mission
"to re-learn what it means to be a museum":
a muse, a medium, a meeting point of human dimension.

What would give us the right to house all of these gems?
These artifacts? These worlds? Sacred objects of desire?

Let us invoke the deepest of truths, the hidden meanings,
the stories of resistance, within the bronze and granite,
ironworks and volcanic stone, glass and gems;
still life captures of cowboys and Indians,
refracted lives of the enslaved who freed themselves;
the stone tablets, clay pots and ceramics,
ancient leathers, beads and porcelains,
tapestries, silks, woods and papers,
weathered cloths and rare books, the ink and the ivory,
prayer boards and platforms, boxes and pages—
adornments of gods.

Let us invoke the respect, dignity and spirit
of honest and equitable trade intercontinentally,
as we adore the Buddhas, Vishnus, Shivas and Devetas,
doorways and portals to the divine:
the goddesses, the sentinels,
the sacred bulls, the mandalas, the urns,
the ancient ceremonial garb, skirts and head cloths,
the many prayers and blessings; storytellers' boxes,
spirit tomes, the Great Spirit, Ometeotl,
Olmec heads, tributes to the Mexica deities,
textiles and carvings, sacred totems,
puppets, fetishes and bundles,
manuscripts and sutras, maps and photographs;
the relics, silks, textiles and carvings,
drums and flutes, whistles and rattles, slings, daggers and knives;
temples of the traveling comedies, enthroned figures,
supernatural vessels and gateways to the infinite:
the boats and inscribed paddles of epic quests,
the cups, bowls and spoons of sacred celebrations and feasts,
countless offerings to ancient and mythical beasts—
things we cannot see now, in this place, in this time,
things that were there in other lands, in other times,
and so they are always here, living
in this milky way house of curiosities.

Let us invoke our highest purpose here, as we rush in
to adorn ourselves in the beauty and glories
of this collective history, this magnificent wonder
of breath.

Let us remember that this art has life, every object: a life.
Let it be situated as so, curated with deep care and admiration,
adorned by rich and appropriate colors on each wall;
this collection: a collective soul of stories and tapestries,
textures of earth and sky,
housed within open arms architecture—
a gorgeous glass house that invites transparency
and wonder.

Let us journey together.

Seven:

Let us cut the ribbons and open the doors,
the spiral staircase, and the elevators to the skyway.
Let us tour the grand re-imagination.
Let us move across a corridor of prompts, en route
to the top of this building's dream, the 7th dimension.
Let us climb the inverted archway to our heavens,
the best new view of the Mile High City,
from Long's Peak to Pikes Peak,
the mountains of the gods,
pinnacle peaks of this earth.

Let us pause for a moment, as we admire the view.
Let us recognize this opportunity to imagine
what the First Nations might rename their ancestral lands,
in that future time of clarity and wisdom, when some of that space
is rightfully returned to its original inhabitants.

Let us invoke and remember this opportunity
to re-think and re-imagine everything.

Let us re-encounter the West, and let us undo
the historical erasure of people and place.
Watch the brown buffalo in motion now,
dancing its origin story, re-claiming its golden prairies,
around the corner from *Lupita* the trabajadora, herself a work of art.
Watch the *Bronze Jack Knife* cowboy on horseback come into motion,
remembering that he was also a Black Cowboy, a Brown Cowboy,
and that the *Indian Warrior* from 1898 is still Here,
on Ute, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Shoshone, Lakota, and Chicana lands.
Remember that the Indigenous
will always be here, changing, transforming and evolving,
just like everybody else in the world.

Let us re-animate our western landscapes with new vision
and understanding.

Six:

Let us accept the Denver Art Museum's invitation
to design, re-design and re-see the many threads of connectivity,
to bathe in the abstract and invoke our curiosity.
Let us re-imagine a proper place for the classical European queen
alongside the American feminist dreamer
who redefined gender, place and purpose within capitalism.
Let us re-consider the multitudes of relational stories
and the relative beauty in all people and things.

Five:

Let us delight in the historical fluidity of the Asian continent.
Let us be moved to question the rituals of our own days and nights.
Let us re-connect to the divinity of our own bodies and homes.

And let us open ourselves again to the essential questions of the day:
Who are we to hold so much of the world's wealth and splendor
in this one building? And if we are to hold it,
what is our sacred responsibility?

Four:

Let me share a story of my time here on the fourth floor,
sitting still and observing space with my son. I watched
all of the spirits housed on the second, third and fourth floors
escape from their platforms and boxes and glass cases
in the wee hours of the morning, every new and full moon dawning.
They convene on the rooftop, and they dance together wildly,
sharing their ancient steps and their newly acquired movements,
laughing comically at their common separation.

Let us remember that Latin-American Art, Latino Art,
Chicano Art, and so on, IS Indigenous Art.
Let us all break out of our rigid and outdated definitions:
the many boxes and silos that trap us in race
while stripping us of our power to re-create culture.

Let us marvel at the imperfect patterns of symmetry,
and let us question every trace of empire.

Three:

Let us reframe every narrative that we were taught
in our outdated educations (if you may call it that).
Let us re-emerge with new questions
about American origin and American identity.
Let us take a long passage together in the *Trade Canoe*,
and let us peer through the inverted columns
and connect with the sacred totems of the Northwest.
Let us make the many necessary connections here,
surrounded by cradles, toys, and hues of joy
amidst the anguish of history.
Let us remember that we are children
who need to play and heal together,
on this truly great and cherished land.

Two:

Let us design, like the ancient carvers of the towering totems.
Let us see each of our own lives as its own sacred museo,
where we are ever-called to curate the next rituals,
the next songs, the next dances, the next feasts
of humanity.

Let us embrace the Museum's invitation, inscribed on these walls:
"I invent it."

Let us join the nightly jaguar as she bursts into the Sixth Sun.
Let us re-invent and re-invest in a new vision for humanity,
in this bilingual and multidimensional space,

in these *Ruby*, *Wild Plum* and *Sky Blue* rooms,
in meditation with the *Sensory Garden*,
in play together within these platforms of possibility,
aqui, in this ever-changing and expansive Mile High design,
where anything and everything is possible,
because We are the creators.

One:

Let us see that this is only the beginning, this inaugural call to *ReVisión*.
Let us see again that water is life, and that *mama tierra* is our true home
in these bodies, in this time, that corn and plant and tree
are bone and blood and limb,
that sustainability is possible.

Let us re-imagine the Universe
alongside the serpent, the dignified migrant,
the Indigenous kings, the winged beings,
the radiance and perception of color,
the collapse of outdated caste systems,
the fluid, mestizo human truth on display.
Let the journey collapse us and expand us
and collapse us again.

Let this building be a portal to our collective memory.

Zero:

Let us celebrate and re-commit, for “this world of the seed
is dawning, is dawning, is dawning,” again.
“Soon, it will be dawn, and our work is not yet done.”

This space has been built in our vision,
with our taxes, our millions, and our imaginations,
to welcome us, to invite us,
to invent new stories, collective stories—
stories that didn’t live in the museums of yesterday.

Let the cutting of this red ribbon remind us all
of our power and duty to create, to re-create,
to re-purpose. Let it be so.

Ometeotl.