

No Admission Required: Sovereignty, Slots
and Native American Art.

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AMERICAN STUDIE

No Admission Required: Sovereignty, Slots and
Native American Art

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how Native American art is displayed in Indian casinos in the Southwest. Exhibition strategies, employed by traditional art and natural history museums offer points of comparison. An overview of legal battles leading up to and following the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988 is provided. While New Mexico is the primary focus of this discussion, the state of Arizona is also mentioned. The evolution of gaming compacts in New Mexico is detailed at length. Local attitudes both for and against the legalization of Indian gaming is documented through media sources, such as newspaper articles, letters to the editor and political cartoons. These sources all speak to the climate of the time: negative stereotypes are prevalent. Connections between tourism and casino advertising are also explored. Early advertisements capitalize on Indian humor, inside jokes that emphasize ironic wordplay or puns. Later examples become more generic, characterized by less text and fewer references to Indian culture. This study draws comparisons between American Indian literature, museum studies, the history of Native American art and depictions of gaming. Themes associated with oral histories, storytelling and a sense of place are analyzed. In addition, topics related to tribal sovereignty, economic well-being and the growth of Indian gaming are investigated. Whether sovereign status is enhanced or depleted by the advent of legalized gaming is a reoccurring question. Native artists who depict casino subject matter are highlighted, with an emphasis on work that offers social commentary or questions the impact of Indian gaming on Native life. The visual culture of specific Indian gaming facilities is explored through Interior and exterior design, ranging from casino chips to monumental sculptures. Casinos discussed include Sandia Resort and Casino, Camel Rock Casino, Isleta Resort and Casino, Buffalo Thunder Casino and Resort, Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort, Casino Arizona and Foxwoods Resort Casino. While the main emphasis of this dissertation is on Pueblo casinos, other indigenous gaming facilities are discussed, including those owned by Navajo, Salt River Pima-Maricopa and Pequot tribal communities. This study provides a new perspective on how Indian casinos can function as museums.

Language

English

Keywords

IGRA, New Mexico, gaming compacts, tourism, museum studies, Native American art, Navajo, Salt River Pima-Maricopa, Pequot, Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, Casino Arizona, Pueblo Indians, Indian humor, American Indian Literature, Gerald Vizenor, David Bradley, Roxanne Swentzell

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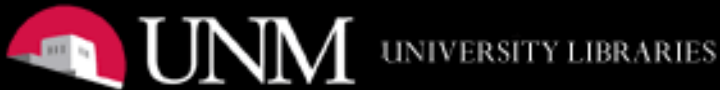
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