

December 11, 2016

To: Christopher Heinrich, DAM Director & Nancy Blomberg, DAM Native Arts Curator

As artist and creator of *Wheel*, and as a Headsman of Traditional Cheyenne Elk Scraper Warrior Society, Earth Renewal Medicine Priest and Full Professor in the Native American Studies Department at the University of Oklahoma for 28 years, I oppose any dismantling, moving or upsetting of the sculpture. By contract, DAM must consult with the artist on the future of *Wheel*. DAM did not abide by the contract.

The site of *Wheel* is holy ground. During the long process of creating, installing and being enriched by the artwork we have been most fortunate that tribal citizens and indigenous leaders from many tribes and nations offered numerous prayers with the pipe at the location. These offerings were focused upon the Earth site of *Wheel*, the legacy of Colorado territorial treaties, the acknowledgement and healing of the Sand Creek Massacre of Colorado and the general well being of indigenous communities.

Each year, the Sand Creek Memorial Run concluded with a candlelight vigil at the site of *Wheel*. Countless emotional tears were shed at the site thus transcending normal museum decorum and firmly ushering *Wheel* into the realm of Native American sanctuary as a ceremonial Medicine Wheel worship place.

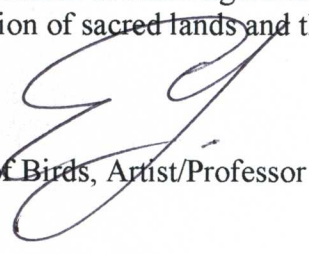
Cheyenne Medicine People called the spirits to aid *Wheel* in its inception and installation by "feeding" the sculpture at the location. Even the DAM curator was blessed with sweet grass smoke in order to remain true and always honor *Wheel*.

The artwork is aligned with significant star systems above us all such as Sirius, Rigel, Polaris, summer solstice sunrise and sunset, winter solstice sunrise and sunset, and spring equinox as well as other astronomical events distinct to this exact location on Earth.

Cheyenne Earth Renewal Priest and Chief Gordon Yellowman states, "Moving the sculpture would be to deface and desecrate the artwork and Cheyenne blessing prayers which were offered during the last 10 years."

Cheyenne Tribal Government Legislator and Sweat lodge Priest Burl Buffalomeat, descendant from Warrior Buffalomeat incarcerated at Fort Marion, Florida 1877 responds, "This Sculpture was put on these grounds through a blessing. I, for one, would not disturb these spirits that were fed and asked to watch over the sculpture."

This red, fifty-foot porcelain on steel artwork took ten years to create and would likely be severely damaged if disturbed. At the 2005 inauguration, the piece was hailed by the Denver Art Museum as their "Signature Sculpture" and an integral centerpiece of the DAM campus. *Wheel* should live on at its site as a Native American worship place upheld by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978. As witnessed at Standing Rock, North Dakota, we can all come together in support of the care and preservation of sacred lands and the indigenous peoples whom continue to honor them.



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