

## **An Architect of Ruins: Dennis Numkena's Archival Precarity**

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The Phoenix-based Hopi artist and architect Dennis Numkena (1941-2010) was a polymath practitioner who broke barriers for Native Americans: he was one of the first Native American architects to have his own architectural firm, founded in 1971, designing buildings on and off reservations; he created the sets and costumes for a Hopi version of Mozart's *Magic Flute* that aired on national public television in the early 1980s; and he was the creative director of Pope John Paul II's historic audience with Native Americans during his visit to Phoenix in 1987. Yet, Numkena's work has escaped scholarly purview, and his name has not yet entered the canon of twentieth-century Native American artists despite the recent enthusiasm for a revisionist approach that includes Indigenous voices. With no institutional archive to memorialize him, Numkena has eluded the recursive nature of art historical research and the feedback loop of canonicity. My case study challenges the received idea of the text-based documentary archive, for an odd man out who resisted the stylistic paradigms of his contemporary Hopi and American Indian artists of the late twentieth century.

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