National College of Art and Design
Fine Art Print

WOUNDED KNEE (1990)

The Indian Arts and Crafts Act and Native American Photography

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Preface

"'Indian Art' can never be a formal or aesthetic proposition. It must always be an inherently political, spiritual, and socially activist process, informing and reinforcing the contemporary struggle to regain the standard of dignity and self-sufficiency once enjoyed by all peoples indigenous to this hemisphere."

Ward Churchill
Creek/Cherokee Metis, 1997

Throughout the entire post-contact colonial period, the cultures of Native Americans, in what is now known as the United States, have been subordinated to the perspectives of Europeans. This has had substantial implications for the evolution of Native 'artistic' endeavour, particularly in the last two centuries. First of all, 'Art' is not a Native American concept, but a European category of activity imported along with the firearms and smallpox. Secondly, the material produce of Native American and Euro-American societies were the outcomes of differing cultural and aesthetic values. Until around the time the camera was invented (1839) indigenous aesthetic work was abstract and functional, whilst European art was figurative and representational - a good painting, in the 'west', was one which created a two dimensional illusion of reality. After the invention of the camera however, this relationship was inverted. In the West, photography supplanted one of the Western artist's functions, and so inventive artists broke away from 'realism' and moved towards abstract and conceptual art; a key factor in this shift being the contemporaneous 'discovery' of the aesthetic work of 'primitive' peoples in Africa and the Pacific. During this same period Native North Americans were going through a period of intense violence and social upheaval. Whilst traditional, material work was still being produced to function in the community as always, some Native Americans found the need to develop aesthetic work with a new function, a more

representational work which would celebrate the aspects of Native American cultures which were being devalued and destroyed. Apart from being a way of countering oppression and proclaiming a right to survive, these new images were a way of making a living and supporting a family so that the culture could survive.

The inversion of Western aesthetic values after the invention of the camera, led to the marginalization of Native American art forms. Figurative work was now considered inferior to conceptual and abstract work and many Native Americans responded by creating work which visually paralleled that of the Euro-American mainstream. The development of 'Native American art' this century is inextricably linked to the projects and patronage of institutions operating under the auspices of the state and federal governments - such as the Museum of New Mexico and the Museum of Fine Arts, both in Santa Fe. During the 20s and 30s the Santa Fe and Oklahoma schools of art participated in the establishment of a 'pan-Indian art' consisting of flat, highly stylized, decorative water-colours, which thereafter became the acknowledged 'traditional Indian painting'.[1] From then on it was only acceptable to paint within these genres and doing so actually proved one's 'Indian-ness'.

By and large, Native American cultural work has been restricted and confined by an imposed European aesthetic which has propogated a tradition without value. Since the 1960s however, questions of representation and power have acquired a central position in the politics of anti-racist and other social movements, and a number of counter-strategies have been adopted. The usefulness of forcing indigenous experience into the forms developed by Europeans has been called into question and many new perspectives have been formulated.

Introduction

"In the context of the covert links between the history of photography, cultural primitivism, and the exploitation of indigenous peoples by various colonial powers, merely to stand behing the camera is an act of resistance."

W. Jackson Rushing, 1992.

As a result of economic, cultural, and historical factors there has been a long delay in the use of photography as a valid form of communication for Native North American people. Native Americans have inherited a system of representation which has been historically lacking in opportunities for self-representation: they have been the subject/object of outside representation, not the representers. The camera has traditionally been a symbol of oppression and always an intrusion, used for outside interests by outside people.

In the past twenty years a substantial body of work has been produced by Native North Americans who are using photography as a tool with which to address the aesthetic, political and social issues which are of immediate concern to their communities today. Although geographically distant and culturally diverse, many are working on similar problems because, as Cherokee artist and activist Jimmie Durham has written, "the problems are so intolerably before us." (Durham, 1990, p. 6) After 500 years of contact between Native Americans and their colonizers, the motivations of the initial encounter still impact on society - the state of Native North America is one of poverty, marginalization, and continuing colonisation.

On November 29th 1990 the United States Congress passed the 'Indian Arts and Crafts Act (1990),' (Public Law 101-644), ostensibly to 'promote and protect Indian arts and crafts.' Actually it defines who, according to federal U.S. law, is a real 'Indian' and what is recognised as an 'Indian' art or craft. The implications of this law are far-reaching, as it raises a wide range of social, cultural, and political issues. The aim of this paper is to assess the significance of this recent legislation for Native Americans who are using photography to confront these issues. Through examination of aspects of the hegemony of Euro-American culture, which is based in the idea of Euro-American identity as superior to all other peoples and cultures, the following chapters will provide the historical context which serves as a platform for the photographic works, which appear in a separate section at the end.

The facts of the present relationship between Native Americans and Euro-Americans in the United States can be defined by reference to their past interactions, and the historical context which gave rise to them. The policies imposed by the U.S. on its domestic populations are a clear continuation of the traditional colonial principles. With this in mind, the first chapter will examine the 'Indian Arts and Crafts Act' (1990) in the context of previous U.S. Indian policies and their colonial foundations. Native American peoples are regulated by over five-thousand more laws than other U.S. citizens (Jaimes, 1992, p.127) so the scope here will necessarily be limited to those key policies concerning identification and assimilation, in order to show that this recent law is the latest in a long line of racist policies designed to serve the needs of Euro-American society by appropriating or eliminating personal, communal, and national Native American identities. It will become apparent that the creation of U.S. 'Indian Policy' has, historically, hinged upon the interaction of Euro-American values and ideas, which represent the trends in dominant society at a specific time, which are in turn connected to the socio-economic forces and vested interests of Western individuals and groups.

In order to show that the 'Indian' was a construction necessary for the conquest of America to take place, the second chapter will focus on the

historical conception of Native American people by Europeans and Euro-Americans. The creation and establishment of the 'Indian,' as both an idea and an image will be outlined by tracing the shift from theological to scientific racism, as will the significant role of photography in the development of a discourse of 'Indian-ness.' It will be necessary to look at the dominant European values and ideas which have produced the basic conceptual categories, the outlines for classification, and the moral criteria by which Native American peoples have been (and continue to be) observed, evaluated, and interpreted. The intention here is to place non-Native representation of Native American peoples within a cultural context, and the intellectual history of the U.S./Western civilisation, to show this representation as a reflection, not of its subject, but of dominant Euro-American culture, and also as dependent upon the political and economic relationships prevailing at specific times.

Through consideration of the persistence of dated, stereotypical images and the negative effects that such representations have on Native American people, the third chapter explores the relationships between representation, difference, and power. Particular attention is given to the role of the media as a source of (mis)information and the carrier of edited and censored versions of American history and life. It will be shown that Native American people are still viewed within the racial and cultural context of anthropology in films and documentaries, and that 'Indian-ness' is still defined primarily, by ill-informed outsiders looking into Native American society from a self-made platform of pre-conceived ideas and values.

Whilst non-Native sources have been invaluable to this research,[2] Native American perspectives must be given priority, and for this reason will be considered 'primary.' The bibliography is divided into two sections, 'primary' (Native American) sources, and 'secondary' (non-Native American) sources. In order not to subordinate Native American cultural modes to those of Europeans, 'last names' do not appear before 'first names' in the Native American part of the bibliography.

Chapter 1

"I'm forever being asked not only my 'tribe,' but my percentage of Indian blood. I've given the matter a lot of thought, and I find I prefer to make the computation based on all of me rather than just the fluid coursing through my veins."

Ward Churchill
Creek/Cherokee Metis, 1991

The foundations of U.S. Indian policy were laid during the first century or so of colonialism in the Americas. Contemporary themes and approaches can be traced back to those formative years when the imperialistic goals of Europeans subordinated all Native Americans to the status of colonial subjects in their own homelands, transferred land title from native inhabitants to crown and settlers, and exploited native resources for European economies. Robert Berkhofer has gone to great lengths to show that the English, French and Spanish had the same basic goals, namely to spread christianity by converting the 'heathen;' to acquire wealth through trade; and to achieve national and personal prestige through colonisation. These aims, symbolised by the 'cross, crown, gold and glory,' were used to legitimise the invasion and take-over of the Americas. (Berkhofer, 1978, p.35) Native peoples were to receive christianity and civilisation in return for their labour and lands, and so theologians developed the early doctrines to justify rapid conquest and legalise force.

Since those early years, the goals of reform according to European and Euro-American criteria, and the continuity of basic Western values, have remained constant. Robert Berkhofer has suggested that this is because there has been long-term competition for the same natural resources by peoples with different cultures and levels of social organisation. (Berkhofer, 1978) Both before and after the War of Independence it seems that the policy-makers

have consistently prioritised two aspirations in the nation's relations with its first peoples; the extinction of title to facilitate white exploitation of land and resources, and the transformation of native lifestyles to copies of approved white models. Throughout the colonial period (1492 - today), U.S. Indian policy has resulted in expropriation of land, demographic decimation due to disease and warfare, and the disruption and destruction of cultures.[1] It seems highly unlikely that these were not desired ends.

To define state policy as 'intention to destroy' would, under the Convention on Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide 1948, become a crime against humanity. So the official description used is 'assimilation,' which is effectively a colonial tool privileging homogeneity. To this end various tactics have been employed, all of them designed to decimate the native population, lower government expenses, speed up exploitation of the land, and diminish the possibilty of any autonomy for the host people.

The Federal Relocation Program of the 1950s, for example, provided native people with incentives to move to approved urban centres where they might be subsumed within vastly larger non-native populations. To qualify for such a programme the applicant was generally required to sign an agreement specifying that they would not return to their respective reservations to live. (Fixico, 1986, pp. 134-157) Although disastrous for individuals, communities, and nations, in this way, by 1980 more than half of the 1.6 million Native Americans had migrated to cities. Other tactics of diminishment included 'checkerboarding' tribal land holdings so that sufficient numbers of non-natives would live on reservation land for intermarriage and miscegenation to occur, so 'diluting' the native population.

The reservation system had provided a means of surveillance and 'enclosure', which would facilitate control and subordination to Euro-American ways. Actually, in isolating large populations from outside influence Native American identities were reinforced. So Acts were introduced to fragment them and prevent the practice of traditional customs.[3]

With the 1887 General Allotment Act, usually referred to as the Dawes Severalty Act, which basically involved the reallocation of reservation lands in accordance with Euro-American concepts of property, Congress introduced the notion of 'Blood-Quantum.' Individual land-parcels would be deeded to 'Indians' who could prove themselves as such: 'Full-Blooded Indians' were issued trust patents, with entitlement to control of their land after twenty-five years; whereas 'Mixed-Bloods' would receive the title by fee-simple patent - entitling immediate control. Reserved land which remained unalloted after all 'blooded' 'Indians' had received their individual parcels was to be declared 'surplus' and opened up for non-native use and occupancy. To further complicate matters and confuse identities, the Act also required 'qualified Indians' to accept U.S. Citizenship. According to M. Annette Jaimes:

> much of the original impetus toward the federal preemption of the sovereign Indian prerogative of defining 'who's Indian,' and the standardization of the racist 'degree-of-blood' method of Indian identification, derived from the budgetary considerations of a federal government anxious to avoid paying its bills.
> (Jaimes, 1992, p. 126)

Due to an increase in the number of 'Indian' groups with whom the U.S. had relations, and the size of the Native American population, the cost associated with underwriting treaty entitlements on a per capita basis had risen. Treaties could not be blatantly abrogated as this would simultaneously both invalidate the legitimacy the U.S. attributed to its occupancy of much of North America, and it would destroy the carefully nurtured image the U.S. had cultivated of itself as a country of progressive laws rather than raw force. So the adoption of the notion of 'Blood-Quantum' was, in part, a devious solution to a financial problem: not being able to repeal its treaty obligations to Native Americans, the federal government acted to limit their number.

Whilst the General Allotment Act was designed to lower government expenses by destroying and assimilating native peoples, it was also designed to break up the tribal mass standing in the way of complete Euro-American hegemony in North America. To this end it also resulted in a huge windfall

of land for the U.S. government: the reserved land base fell from about 138 million acres to about 48 million acres. (Jaimes, 1992, p.126) The cohesion of indigenous societies was radically disrupted by concepts totally alien to native thinking, self-sufficiency was eliminated, and the stage set for the permanent state of economic dependency within the U.S. Whilst the allotment system was finally abolished by the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934, by the early 1900's the 'Blood-Quantum' requirement had proved such a boon to the federal government that it soon became the generally employed 'eligibility factor,' triggering entitlement to any federal service, from health care to education.

With the passing of the 'Indian Arts and Crafts Act' (1990) came a clear example of the reassertion of the principles of eugenics, reminiscent of Nazi and Afrikaner movements, in federal identification policies. This Act, also known as Public Law 101-644, was passed in response to growing sales in the billion-dollar U.S 'Indian art market.' Richard Shiff has commented that "sales of Indian artefacts have actually grown so great that significant commercial interests are at stake." (Shiff, 1992, p. 74) Whilst Native Americans control a tiny portion of this market, a large number earn their living as producers of 'arts and crafts,' often compromising themselves to satisfy consumer demands. Whilst unnecessary competition is far from desireable, this market is by no means saturated, and there are significant financial rewards offered to those who create the signs of 'Indian' life deemed valuable to the Euro-American consumer; this leads entrepreneurs to introduce 'inauthentic' goods, works that may have significance in their own right but do not originate from the required source: a 'real Indian.'

The current fascination for 'Indian art' calls to mind the long tradition of Westerners scavenging other cultures as a way of establishing their identity, and validating their own values and tastes by selecting that which appears to confirm their assumptions. A look at the critical history of 'collecting' will show that, in the West, identities are constructed, in part, via an accumulation of knowledge, experience, memories and objects, all of which

are cultural signs or icons. Positions within this system are not fixed, but vary according to the 'truths' of a particular time and place, and are dependent upon institutions, conventions, and codes of understanding for effect. The consumers, in this case, control what is to be held worthy and desireable because the objects which are produced for sale need to be acceptable to a public which has preconceived ideas of what is typical and appropriate. Nelson Graeburn, has written about commercial arts that they must "symbolize to outsiders a few central characteristics or beliefs about their makers." (Graeburn, 1976, p. 17) The value attributed to objects or images is not inherent in them, but will vary according to the needs and dispositions of those doing the valuing. The 'Indian art market' is not a result of Native American's demands but of the United States of America's needs. Richard Shiff suggests that:

> Native American arts and crafts acquire their monetary vlue according to their origin in the perceived traditional ethical values of Native American society .... Euro-Americans attach a mythology to Indian crafts and other signs of 'Indianness,' so that the objects reflect an idealization of their maker's way of life - the Indian respect for processes of nature and natural materials; their environmentally sensitive economy; their refinements of handiwork, which assembly-line labor fails to supply.
> (Shiff, 1992, p.74)

The consumers of 'Indian' culture demand an art uncontaminated by Western influences, which symbolizes a more basic way of life. They want to know they are getting the 'genuine' article rather than an imitation; they want a guarantee of 'authenticity.'

In a climate where there is great pride in 'Indian' heritage, and many claim 'Indian' blood, it seemed important for Native American artists and craftspeople to ensure against misrepresentation of Native American cultures and protect their livelihoods, and so a group in New Mexico, headed by the painter David Bradley, led the initiative which resulted in the passing of Public Law 101-644. Seminole/Creek/Navajo artist Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie has noted that:

> people who are in favour of the law claim that it strengthens sovereignty, but theirs is a very subjective version of sovereignty .... The U.S. government has always held a paternalistic attitude towards Native Americans. The people who support the law essentially have become successful experiments in assimilation because they accept colonialistic ideas about blood quanta. (Jenkins, 1993, p. 4)

This law is a regulation of cultural exchange which alleges to identify 'authentic' Native Americans by attempting to "simplify complex issues of identity and creativity by focusing on ethnic authenticity and purity of blood." (Jenkins, 1993, p.4) As the law is designed to protect United States Indian products, it clearly segregates Native Americans in the U.S. from Native Americans in other countries on the basis of national political borders, and requires that they identify themselves with their colonisers. "It will be necessary for sellers to make sure that the products of other Indian groups are sold in such a way that it is clear they are not United States Indian products .... Sellers should clearly label the country of tribal ancestry."[4] To give the legislation weight, Congress imposed penalties of up to $1 million in fines and as much as fifteen years in federal prison for anyone not meeting its definitions, who offers to display for sale, or to actually sell, a product which suggests it is 'Indian;' and a fine of up to $5 million for galleries, museums, or other private concerns who display the work of anyone not meeting federal defintions of 'Indian-ness'. (Jaimes, 1992, p. 131)

The regulations of this Act define an 'Indian Product' as "any art/craft product made by an 'Indian' person as defined by this Act". An 'Indian Person' is "any individual who is a member of a federally or state recognised tribe; or for purposes of this Act is certified as a non-member Indian artisan by an Indian tribe." An 'Indian Tribe' is "any Indian tribe/band/nation/Alaska native village or any organised group or community recognised as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the U.S. to Indians because of status as 'Indians;' or any Indian group that has been formally recognised as an Indian tribe by a state legislature/state commission or similar organization legislatively vested with state tribal recognition authority".

Those who do not meet the 'blood-quantum' requirements are excluded, as are the entire populations of federally unrecognized tribes such as the Lumbee of North Carolina, or the Abenaki of Vermont; or those of recently 'dissolved' tribes such as the Juaneno of California. There are more than 200 tribes in the U.S. who are not recognised by the U.S. government. Around the turn of the century, 'The Curtis Act' parceled out 'Indian Territory' to those tribal members who would allow themselves to be numbered and registered. The remainder was given or sold to the non-Native homesteaders and businesses. Many Native Americans were living outside the designated 'Indian Territory' - present day Oklahoma - and so felt there would be nothing to gain by registering. Others mistrusted the whites or simply did not wish to be humiliated and controlled in this way. The Cherokee Nighthawk and Creek Snake Societies were just two of those who resisted, but the idea of formal tribal membership is rejected by many Native Americans because, as Cherokee artist and critc Kay Walking Stick has written, "it is a foreign bureaucratic imposition alien to their own traditions of thought." (Kay Walking Stick, 1991, p. 21)

Among Native American tribes in the U.S. there are no consistent criteria for tribal membership, and in some it has nothing to do with blood or racial identity. Kay Walking Stick outlines the curious predicament of a person born to a Hopi father and a Salish mother, outside the Salish reservation. Salish membership requires that birth be on Salish land, whilst Hopi membership is matrilineal. Tribal membership would not be possible for such a person, and although certification of ancestry could be applied for instead, the criteria are entirely at the discretion of respective tribes. Some may not even adopt a certification process. (Kay Walking Stick, 1991, pp. 20-21) Consequently many people who identify themselves as Native American (synonymous here with 'Indian') are not recognised as such by the federal government (and for this same reason, lose aid promised to them through treaty, and entitlement to U.S. programmes and services such as health care and education).

According to M. Annette Jaimes, the federal manipulation of the question of 'Indian' identity is concerned with keeping "the aggregate number of 'Indians' at less than 1 percent of the overall U.S. population and thus devoid of any potential electoral power." (Jaimes, 1992, p. 129) It can also be seen as a means of employing the classic 'divide and conquer' strategy of keeping Native Americans at odds with one another, a dispute which follows the formulation of Frantz Fanon wherein the colonizer contrives issues which pit the colonized against one another, elaborated in his 1966 book "The Wretched Of The Earth." (Fanon, 1966) What can be stated for sure, is that the appropriation of the definition of 'Indian' identity has had definite financial advantages for the U.S. and is connected to its desire to profit from the resources of others.

Creek/Cherokee Metis activist and writer Ward Churchill believes that "the definition of its own membership or citizenry is the internal prerogative of any sovereign nation" and that NO nation has the right to impose these definitions on another - as the U.S. has done to Native Americans. The U.S. government's certification of tribal membership is a denial of Native American sovereignty and is equivalent to the U.S. stipulating who may call themselves a member or citizen of Ireland or Japan. It is an aspect of U.S. Indian policy indicating an advanced and extremely successful form of colonialism which facilitates the continued subordination, and statistical extermination of Native American peoples; a project which began in 1492.

Chapter 2

"Is it really possible to take over someone's house, murder most of the family, lock the remaining victims in the closet, and then pretend that it is your own little house on the prairie in the suburbs?"

Jimmie Durham
Cherokee, 1992

Over the centuries, the policies regulating Native American peoples have been determined by the values and political objectives prevailing in European and American societies. Whilst specific goals may have differed, the basic percerption of the 'Indian' was generally agreed upon and this served to justify the necessity, as well as to prove the desireability of these policies; it was then used as a baseline for measuring success. [5]

The 'Indian' as a conceptual category created during the early period of contact via the imposition of European concepts and names, was provided with meaning through imagery. The original inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere did NOT call themselves by a single term, but ever since the arrival of Columbus in the Americas they have been defined by ignorant 'outsiders'. As a result of poor navigational skills Columbus assumed this 'new world' to be India and therefore filled with 'Indios'. (In the 15th and 16th centuries this referred to all of Asia east of the river Indus). Although subsequent explorations corrected this error, the Spanish continued to use 'los indios' for peoples of the 'new world'. From the Spanish came the English 'Indian' and similar words in other European languages. The name refers to the peoples of at least two-thousand cultures, even more societies, numerous languages customs and beliefs.

The basic imagery was set in place by European experiences prior to settlement and during the early years of contact: indeed, until the latter half of the 16th century, what Europeans knew of the Americas came from Spanish sources, such as the 'Mundus Novus,' a widespread publication by Amerigo Vespucci (1504-5) - a detailed ethnography with vivid descriptions of customs enhancing images of 'Indians' in the minds of Europeans. As the Spanish empire extended over the Americas, observation acknowledged the diversity encountered but the general term 'Indian' persisted. The ability to differentiate increased as knowledge increased over time but did not alter fundamental conceptions of 'Indian.'

The classification of a variety of cultures and societies as a single entity for purposes of description and analysis is a denial of the cultural and social diversity of Native Americans, and a misrepresentation of the differences among peoples labelled 'Indian', but subsequent explorers, writers, and conquerors followed the Spanish model and only confirmed what was already known. Robert Berkhofer maintains that "For Englishmen, as for other Europeans, the use of general terms for Native Americans coexisted with knowledge of specific differences among the peoples so denominated." (Berkhofer, 1978, p. 15)

The perceptions of Native Americans were no doubt shaped by hopes for their exploitation, and the descriptions provided by explorers, missionaries and settlers would have been greatly influenced by these conceptions. Jean Fisher has suggested that:

> as the European powers became more interested in the exploitive and colonialist potential of the new continent, the representation of the 'Indian' became more conditioned by European fantasies at home than by whatever accurate details were available,
> (Fisher, 1988 p. 103)

a problem which was exacerbated by the fact that European illustrators could not imagine a people outside their own conventions of representation.[6]

The earliest known description of the 'Indian' came from the pen of Columbus in his widely published letter of 1493. He reported tales of hostile savages and innocents in paradise, ambivalent and conflicting images which made a huge contribution to the myths of the 'hostile savage' and the 'noble savage.' (Berkhofer, 1978, pp. 6-7) The 'good indians' were friendly, hospitable, proud, simple, handsome, and brave; but the 'bad indians' were heathen, promiscuous, lazy, deceitful, and savage. The 'good indian' image signalled the ability to be exploited and easy fulfilment of European desires, whilst the 'bad indian' image was the 'proof' of the necessity of force to achieve these ends and rationalize the Europeans conquest. Beneath such representations lay the idea of 'deficiency' which allowed for the assumption that it was the European's job to bring them up to European standards.

Robert Berkhofer has written that "white views of 'Indians' are inextricably bound up with the evaluation of their own society and culture," (Berkhofer, 1978, p. 27) that they are inseperable from the beliefs, values and institutions cherished at the time. By 1492 there was a well established tradition of religious and ethnic exclusivity in Europe, and European culture was the privileged term that defined all others. During the mid-thirteenth century the Pope claimed hegemony over the secular emperors in western Europe and formulated the ideology that Europeans/christians were a unified ethnicity. When Europeans set out to 'discover' 'new worlds' which they could colonize the "wealthy and powerful elite carefully selected the thoughts and ideas that fundamentally supported the structured European society they themselves ran." (Mohawk, 1992, p. 441)

The moral criteria of christianity and civilisation dominated European thinking on Native Americans; the Spanish, the French, and the English all held the same basic values and orientations and so they made the same comparisons. By their standards of measurement the 'Indians' were always erring or deficient.[7] As the initial aim of conquest gave way to that of settlement, any favourable attitudes towards Native peoples were soon

suppressed under the discourse of savagism, in moral justification for the theft of the land. Jean Fisher suggests that:

> the subsequent history of white-indian contact (namely that of disease, war and decimation) especially in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, proved to white people that civilisation and indianness were inherently incompatible and verified the initial conception that gave rise to the imagery. (Fisher, 1991, p. 297)

From then on, civilisation and 'Indians' actually became antithetical. This attitude was based on perceptions common in every colonizer/colonized relationship consisting of two modes: identification - the recognition of 'sameness - resulting in assimilation (the projection of ones values onto others); and the recognition of difference, resulting in comparison, which is translated into terms of superiority/inferiority. The 'Indian' project was founded on a fascination with human differences which in the history of Western Europe, have been perceived in simplistic opposition to each other: civilized/primitive; good/bad; dominant/subordinate; etc. Following this model Jacques Derrida suggested that such oppositions are never neutral, that there is always a relation of power. One of the pair is always dominant and includes the other in its field of operations. (Derrida, 1972) According to Simone de Beauvoir, "all societies create a group identity which is established in relation to some designated 'other'" (Hall & Metcalf, 1993) Everything is defined in relation to something else: that which it is not, an example of ethnocentric society's negative naming process. Words such as 'primitive' are binary terms implying and determining the boundaries of their opposites. The 'primitive' state is an imperialist construction which enables differences to be described in qualitative terms. It defines a lack of those qualities used historically in the West as a measure of civilisation. As is the case with other peoples and groups, the essence of the European image of the 'Indian' comes down to the definition of Native Americans as a seperate 'other,' who is closer to nature, always at a prior developmental stage, and always alien to the European.

According to Jean Fisher, the construction of the 'Indian' was "motivated towards proving the inherent inferiority of native peoples, and destined to justify white claims to their land." (Fisher, 1991, p. 295) If Native American people had existed in the minds of Europeans the conquest could not have taken place; for the myth of civilisation to be realized cultural differences had to be denied. Signs of culture that were unfamiliar were not recognised, and familiar signs were suppressed because they were incompatible with the necessity of seeing Native Americans as backward and savage, and so anthropologists, military officers, government officials, and artists, produced the numerous written and visual representations which would help justify genocide.

In 1830 the Indian Removal Act had forcibly removed entire populations of Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole people living east of the Mississippi River to lands west of the Mississippi River, thereby opening up the South to land speculators and homesteaders. This journey became known as the 'trail of tears' as many died from exposure and starvation. Between the 1820s and the 1880s similar events were taking place across North America; Native Americans witnessed thousands of deaths and the illegal appropriation of millions of acres of land by acts of the U.S. government, State governments, by businesses and greedy individuals.

By the end of the 1870s North America was rapidly becoming domesticated, and throughout the U.S. Native American people had been militarily defeated and restricted to reservations. Although the conquest was essentially complete, the last battle took place in 1890 at Wounded Knee, on the Sioux Reservation, where as many as 300 Native Americans were killed. Their 'crime' was 'Indianness' and their punishment justified under the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, according to which, those who were thought to be racially 'inferior' (especially 'Indians') had to be cleared from the path of Anglo-Saxon 'progress.' If this could not be achieved by enslavement or assimilation, extermination was carried out in the name of Western Expansion.

Whilst native peoples were fighting for survival, Europeans and Euro-Americans were celebrating the invention of photography, using the camera as an instrument with which to document the genocide taking place. Photographs of Chief Bigfoot lying dead and frozen in the snow, and of the mass grave after the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 (Fig, 1 & fig. 2) are amongst the earliest photographic images of Native Americans. They record the culmination of this era, and "solidify the dominance of the white man over the hostile Indian" (Hill 1993 p. 7)

After an enforced break cause by the American Civil War (1861-1865), westward expansion resumed, and the government sent out survey expeditions,' accompanied by teams of photographers such as Timothy O'Sullivan and William Henry Jackson, who were to provide scientific documentation of their expeditions findings. This function however, was often sacrificed to the interest of aesthetic appeal by concentrating on the most sensational and dramatic aspects of the environments they encountered.

Photography had been invented in 1839, during the booming technological development of the mid nineteenth century. In the face of accelerated social and physical change (and the fear that technology could wipe out all that was familiar and comfortable), it was easy for people to believe that photography could preserve the world as it had been. As change accelerated, public belief in objectivity increased, and so, the advertising and commercial potential of such images was considerable. Along with commercial photographers such as Edward Muybridge, and those employed by the railroads, the survey photographers actually played an important part in the process of westward expansion and helped to open the West. For those immigrants who were tired of the populated centres of the North East, it seemed a paradise just waiting to be settled.

Frontier painters and engravers had already played a major part in bringing the enemy home to Eastern audiences, creating numerous images of 'Indians' as savage obstacles to 'progress,' but their commissions were often based on

Figure 1.

'Chief Bigfoot', Wounded Knee, 1890

Figure 2.

'Mass Grave', Wounded Knee, 1890

European portrait traditions of the time. (Fig. 3) Frederic Remington, one of the most famous artists of the Old West, regarded the 'Indians' as "an inferior race deserving of extinction" (Berkhofer, 1978, p. 101) He and his peers produced numerous sculptures, engravings, paintings, and stories for a public who loved to see the 'Indian' defeated. (Figs, 4, to 6) However, whilst it was accepted that painting was open to human manipulation, the objectivity of photography went unquestioned, and it made the myths of painters seem plausible. Photographic portrayals of 'Indians' as 'savages' only confirmed what people already knew: that 'Indians' were 'savage;' but the foundations of this imagery (which served to justify genocide) was based on racist principles.

The Enlightenment project ranked societies and peoples along an evolutionary scale from 'nature' to 'culture' and so history came to be seen in terms of genesis and growth, which was always linear, and contradictory to the perceptions of native peoples. European standards and the idea of 'progress' were used to measure the direction and development of peoples, regardless of geography or history.[8] According to John Mohawk, "all the attitudes that existed under the previous theological order find their way into the new scientific order, not only unchanged, but with a renewed and revitalized life." (Mohawk, 1992, p. 441) Science became increasingly concerned with human variation and classification according to 'race,' and with hierarchical frames of reference. Such views were justified in accordance with "so-called scientific and ethnological 'evidence,' the basis of a new kind of 'scientific racism'." (Hall, 1997, p. 235)

Since its inception Western photographers had used 'Indians' as subject matter, but during the 1870s, as the nascent science of ethnology became an important element, the scientific focus of the frontier surveys broadened. In the scientific era, when racial prejudice was an aspect of 'natural history,' science explained the necessity of 'Indians' dying, and science would also preserve them for future generations. Ethnographers set out to document a life they imagined was disappearing, an activity compared by Christopher

Figure 3.

'Young Omahaw, war Eagle, Little Missoure, and Pawnees',
Charles Bird King, 1821

Figure 4.

'Last of the Race', Thompkins Harrison Matteson, 1847

Figure 5.

'The Luckless Hunter,' Frederic Remington, 1909

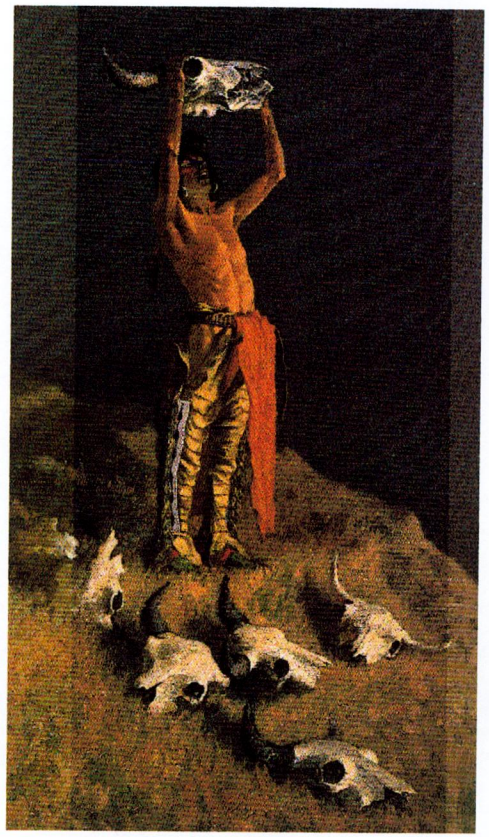


Figure 6.

'Conjuring Back the Buffalo'
Frederic Remington, 1892

Lyman to the more contemporary attempts to record the behavior of chimps on the brink of extinction. (Lyman, 1982, p. 19)

Whilst the presence of Native Americans had been an inconvenience, to say the least, the sudden possibility of their 'disappearance' generated a wave of nostalgia, and guilt. A fear of loss akin to that which had fostered a belief in the objectivity of photographs encouraged public belief that science could preserve the valuable aspects of cultures. Anthropologists and photographers such as Edward S. Curtis (1868 - 1952) rushed to capture on film the 'primitive' people who were believed to be 'vanishing' in the face of Western 'progress.'[9] The camera was the ideal cultural weapon with which they could be fixed in place on the evolutionary ladder. However, whilst photographs of 'Indians' proliferated they usually fell way short of objective documentation, because, in the emergent scientific era of the late nineteenth century, the photographic illusion of 'realism' and 'authenticity' enabled photographers to discreetly project personal attitudes and motives onto their subjects.

In line with popular assumptions, Edward Curtis set out to document for posterity a race of people who were believed to be passing off the stage of history. Interactions between Euro and Native American cultures were referred to as 'acculturation.' The 'Indian' could improve - move up the evolutionary scale - by accepting and adopting European standards, but in doing so would forfeit the quality of 'Indianness' that was worth preserving, and so become less 'authentic.' The 'real' 'Indian' was the one who did not succumb to outside influences and remained uncontaminated by Western culture, the one who existed before contact. When Curtis could not find signs of the 'disappearing' lifestyles he wanted to record, he constructed them. Employing a range of techniques he set about creating the images which conformed to his beliefs.

Like other itinerant photographers operating among Native Americans, Curtis carried a stock of clothes and props with which to deck out his sitters, whose "heritage was considered sufficiently preserved when captured within

Figure 7.
'In a Piegan Lodge', Edward S. Curtis, (n.d.)

Figure 8.
'In a Piegan Lodge', Edward S. Curtis, (n.d.)

Figure 9.

'Planning a Raid',Edward S. curtis, (n.d.)

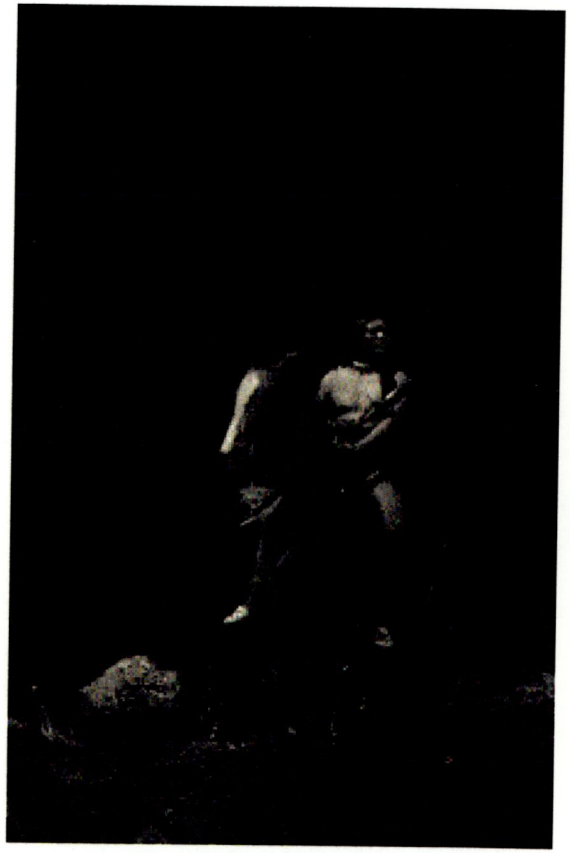


Figure 10.

'Night Scout - Nez Perce'
Edward S. Curtis, (n.d,)

the edges of the photographic record." (Rosler, 1989, p. 310) His fantasy of 'truth' was completed by selective posing, framing, cropping, and then retouching any remaining signs of life considered incompatible with 'Indianness'. Manufactured objects such as wagons, parasols, and product labels, evidence of acculturation, would be carefully removed from the negative with a retouching stylus, before printing. In the photograph 'In a Piegan Lodge,' an object in a box, possibly a clock, is visible in the first photograph (Fig. 7) but is nowhere to be seen in the second (Fig. 8). Many photographs were also retouched in pursuit of aesthetic appeal, such as 'Night Scout - Nez perce' (Fig. 10) which was actually taken in daylight. Another impressionistic tactic was the frequent use of a very soft focus which prioritized a romantic feel and dramatic effect over detail. Any unwanted subject matter that could not be excluded through framing and cropping could similarly be 'blurred' out of existence by using a wide lens aperture to give an extremely shallow depth-of-field and a restricted area of focus.

Not all evidence of acculturation was automatically removed however. The rifles held by two of the subjects in 'Planning a Raid' (Fig. 9) are clearly signs of Western influence, but they are quite effective as proof of the popular conception of the aggressiveness and hostility of the tribes of the Great Plains. Christopher Lyman suggests that these tribes occupied a prominent place in the imaginations of city audiences. Reports of the conquest of this area had emphasized their 'savagery,' but because they did not conform to popular imagery, they were presented to curious easterners via 'Wild West Shows,' dramatizations of sham battles which encouraged the expected image of the 'bloodthirsty savage,' Because such characterizations were widespread, this image of the 'Plains Indian' came to be seen as the quintessential representation of 'Indianness.' (Lyman, 1982, p. 55) When Curtis started his work on the project that became 'The North American Indian' saleability was a necessary priority, so he focused his attention on the tribes with whom the public were more familiar and whose appearance would most easily tie in with popular concepts and images. He well knew that:

> the Northwest Plains Indian [is], to the average person, the typical American Indian, the Indian of our schoolday books .... The constant slaughtering of the buffalo trained him to the greatest physical endurance, and gave an inbred desire for bloodshed.
> (Curtis, 1906, p. 660)

Curtis suppressed any tribal differences he may have perceived in favour of an imagined racial unity: 'the Indian.' In his attempts to represent this category, Curtis sacrificed the possibility of producing a useful scientific document, but in accordance with the popular wisdom that change depleted 'Indianness,' Curtis probably viewed his manipulations as a way of adding 'truth' to his work. The romantic and nostalgic images created in pursuit of this representation reflect the values and needs of Euro-American society at the turn of the century; his achievement is more or less equivalent to that of any well made contemporary ethnographic/travel photograph/film.

For most ethnographers and photographers the 'primitive Indian' was an accurate depiction; in fact, such illusions were probably so ingrained in the public consciousness, that if Curtis's images had been more accurate they would not have been credible, and so, in "choosing to specialize in rather mythical imagery of 'the Indian,' Curtis presented an allegory which appealed strongly to a sense of Americanness." (Lyman, 1982, p. 21) So the story of the photographic documentation of 'Indian life' actually becomes 'the history of white attitudes towards the 'Indians' and the history of the belief in the camera to form and reinforce attitudes.' It is basically a collective Euro-American exercise in creative historicizing rather than a visual document.

Unfortunately, Curtis was unable to take on board cultural difference without circumscribing it with personal desires, and his lack of respect in this concern displaces the personal identity of each sitter to one donated from outside, and in doing so, he contributes to the replacement of Native-conceived self-imagery with Euro-American perceived and projected imagery. According to Jean Fisher this imposition is "no less vicious than overt racism in its effects upon the colonized victim alienated from his and her own representations." (Fisher, 1988, p. 104) But such accusations are easy with hindsight. Curtis's

complicity in the dispossession of Native American peoples was probably not wilful, and it is unlikely that he was aware of his significant role in the further sentimental mythification of the 'Indian' necessary to dominant Euro-American society. Lyman explains that "when faced with the cultural complexities of Oklahoma in the late 1920s, Curtis finally began to understand that 'the Indian' whom he had tried to present did not exist." (Lyman, 1982, p. 138) The damage, however, had at this stage, been done. His romanticism and nostalgia had caused him to idealize and sentimentalize his subjects, and to consolidate the myth of the 'noble savage.'

Chapter 3

"Don't worry - I'm a good Indian. I'm from the West, love nature, and have a special, intimate connection with the environment. (And if you want me to, I'm perfectly willing to say it's a connection white people will never understand). I can speak with my animal cousins, and believe it or not I'm appropriately spiritual. (Even smoke the pipe)."

Jimmie Durham, 1988.

Although more than one-hundred years have passed since the first photograph of a Native American they are still represented primarily by ill-informed outsiders looking into Native American society from a self-made platform of pre-conceived ideas and values, which has little, if any, space for the voices of those represented. The attempts of non-Native peoples to represent Native Americans by use of a few simplified, exaggerated, and decontextualized symbols, result in stereotypical images which are, none-the-less, a particularly potent form of colonisation.

Homi Bhabha has defined the stereotype as a form of multiple and contradictory belief, which gives knowledge of difference but simultaneously disavows or masks it. (Bhabha, 1983) Visual stereotypes can be socially distancing and psychologically damaging, yet children, for example, are exposed to them from a very early age. Popular as identity affirming images, they can easily become potential sites of misidentification. In his seminal book "Black Skin, White Masks," Frantz Fanon suggests that the introjection of identities constructed by the colonial text is effectively a mechanism of control and dependency "which coerced the colonized person into a masquerade of identification with the white European." (Fanon, 1967, p. 161) With the power to alter both the individual and the group sense of identity, the stereotype is the image that gives meaning to the dominant strategy of

colonial power. Unfortunately such images proliferate in contemporary U.S. society, where 'Indian' names and images are used to sell every sort of product. Thanks to the work of advertisers, and film and television producers, the old stereotypes are alive and well in the American imagination.

When Edward Curtis died in 1952 his work was virtually unknown, but the mysticism of the 1960's led to its resurrection as people searched for symbols expressing a better reality and more profound human experience than the rigid conventions they had inherited. The stolid 'Indians' in Curtis's pictures "symbolized for many the survival of human values in a universe gone mad with materialistic greed." (Vine Deloria Jr., 1982, p. 12) Whilst affluent life-styles raped the earth and polluted the atmosphere, native ecological sense and land ethics seemed valuable to the survival of the nation and the world. The perceived communal and spiritual foundations of native life seemed to offer a superior example, and alternative ways of life were proposed as a solution to America's problems.

Whilst the photographs of the mass grave at Wounded Knee in 1890 had only solidified Euro-American's dominance over Native Americans, now, similar images of the Mai Lai massacre in Vietnam managed to stir the public conscience. When, at Wounded Knee in 1973, a battle raged between the American Indian Movement and the federal government over Native rights and self-determination, the political advocacy was documented by photographers drawn to the cause. Although these were mostly non-Native, their images showed people uniting against a common cause. The potential of the media to generate popular, national, and international support was realized and exploited. The period marked a significant change in attitudes, but interest in the concerns and needs of Native American people tends to be fleeting and superficial, the U.S. is far more concerned with intervention elsewhere than with addressing any problems at home.

1992 marked the quincentennial anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas and the celebrations generated renewed interest in Native American history and culture among non-Native peoples. Whilst films and documentaries produced by non-natives chronicled 'Indian history' focusing on the injustices and genocide that Native people suffered at the hands of Euro-Americans, W. Jackson Rushing argued that the quincentennial celebrations promoted a retrospective gaze which "prevents us from focusing on the continuing colonisation and commodification of Native culture(s) by Euro-American corporate and political interests." (Rushing, 1992a, p. 6)

Films such as Kevin Kostner's epic romantic fantasy 'Dances With Wolves' (1992) dramatically show that the cycle of fascination is never-ending; in spite of hundreds of years of contact and drastically changed conditions of Native life, fundamental themes and images persist. Casting the Sioux as the 'noble savages,' and the Pawnee as the 'bloodthirsty' type, all the old stereotypes are reinscribed, whilst the traditional theme ('Indians' are either for or against, settlers/soldiers/white women) does not allow for serious treatment of the present relationship. Luiseno/Mexican artist James Luna pointed out that:

> this movie did nothing but glorify all the good stuff. It didn't show any Indians mad, or any Indians upset. It didn't show any Indians cry. It didn't show any Indians fucking up, we're still beautiful, stoic, and pretty. You see the movie and you go out and see a fat, overweight, acne-covered, poor, uneducated person - is that the real Indian you want to see?
> (Durland, 1991, p. 39)

Revisionist histories, such as this, which perpetuate images of Native people divorced from contemporary society, ignore the oppression and exploitation which still continues, and contribute to a discourse which is sentimentally moral and apologetic; a discourse which is not analytical of U.S. society or the conditions which make an apology seem necessary. In their quest for the 'ideal' version of 'history' non-Native writers, directors, and actors replace cultural diversity with homogeneity and ignore the changes wrought by history. Their understanding of Native Americans is in accordance with their own needs and moral values, and is irrespective of the outlook, desires, and

experiences of the people they profess to know and represent. According to Jean Fisher:

> the use of the Other in Western literary or visual representation is at worst an appeal to exotic fantasy, at best a mourning of the past. Neither option confronts the reality of a present that continues to disempower the people deemed Other of the right to speak for themselves."
> (Fisher, 1991, p.104)

Traditionally the lead 'Indian' roles in films have been played by Europeans and Asians, whilst Native Americans were hired as extras for background action. When exceptions are made the 'Indian' is usually denied a personal voice. In Ken Kesey's "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest," (1975) the 'Indian' character is rendered literally voiceless, and is defined by his name alone - 'Tonto' in Spanish literally means 'dumb'/'stupid.' It seems that Native Americans are simply not trusted to portray themselves. There is still no Native American Denzl Washington or Eddie Murphy in Hollywood. Maybe as Jean Fisher has suggested, this denial of a Native voice ensures that "the 'explorer' secures the coherence of his own boundaries and maintains mastery of the narrative." (Fisher, 1992, p45)

History is the central site of the struggle for collective memory, cultural representation, and political legitimacy; so it can never be neutral ground. Bikhu Parekh suggests that for this reason "every country therefore aims so to control the teaching of its history that it legitimizes the prevailing structure of power and mobilizes its future citizens around a specific view of its identity and central values." (Parekh, 1997, p. 173) This goes some way towards explaining why Euro-'Indian' history has always privileged the perspective of the colonizer and ignored or dismissed that of the oppressed.

The story of the U.S. is that it tamed a 'wilderness' .... then, that the 'wilderness' was full of 'savage' 'Indians' in need of the Euro-Americans .... then, that all the 'Indians' 'died' .... and lastly, that there are still 'Indians' alive today, who are happy with the situation, but they're not real 'Indians'.

Thus, the U.S. can claim to be the very first colonial nation to establish itself against and through the denial of its original inhabitants.[10]

Because as Jean Fisher suggests, "Native American values, histories, and experiences exceed the representational frame of the European," (Fisher, 1988, p.105), and pose a threat to the coherence of colonial order, the U.S. finds itself in an awkward situation, wherein it is necessary to reconcile the disempowerment of Native Americans with the American liberal self-image. Such a coherence obviously requires absolution from the past and from guilt, and to this end efforts are made to substitute Native American frameworks of identity (which are being destroyed by the attempted dismemberment of traditional Native organizations, and by destruction of the land), with a Euro-American system of representation which selectively and strategically, appropriates signifiers of the subject people and reassigns them to a narrative which is capable of containing the perceived threat. To acknowledge diversity would be to threaten the very legitimacy of the colonial state, and the recognized theory of American culture which revolves around the 'ideal' of the 'melting pot,' which is basically 'assimilation' made acceptable.

If colonial discourse reduces its' subject to such an abject state of dependence and inaction from where can the colonized person respond? Fanon suggested that the route to self-realization (for black people) lay in deconstructing the politics of the colonial framework, and that 'blackness' was in fact the difference that could challenge Eurocentric narratives of an ideal, unitary self-identity. Surely Native Americans can similarly, precipitate "an epistemological crisis, which exposes the fundamental instability of those knowledges that circumscribe the social and political place of colonized peoples." (Fisher, 1992, p.44) After all, in the last thirty years or so, the easy assumptions upon which authority has been based in America have been seriously challenged. Deconstruction has shown that difference can never be wholly captured within any binary system; meaning is not fixed; and 'knowledge is only an intelligible construct within a definite discourse, it is not an objective fact or 'reality.' (Foucault, 1980) The mechanisms of

structure are much more visible than previously and, as such, should be less secure.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s elevated the struggles of African-Americans to the status of concern for the entire nation, but there has been no such perception in relation to Native Americans, who are consistently denied legal and constitutional rights. One possible reason for this discrepancy is that African-Americans have no aspirations to secede from the U.S. and so are not a significant threat to the territorial integrity of the nation, (which is connected to Fanon's concept of a unitary self-identity). It is unlikely that all Native Americans would view secession as a viable option, given the choice, but, according to Glenn T. Morris, the possibility is a major worry for the U.S. and must be avoided at all costs, even that of the fundamental right to self-determination and definition. Unless the U.S. acknowledges formally and unequivocally these rights, any form of self-representation will always mean the opposite: the continuation of a relationship between colonizer and colonized. Native Americans need to be able to decide for themselves the formal relationship to be held with the U.S. The United Nations 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples' (1960) states that all peoples should be able to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development," (Morris, 1992 p. 74) but as is usually the case with elements of international law pertaining to human rights, the U.S. abstained from signing.

In this, so-called, 'post-colonial' era, Native American people are bound to a disciplinary state paternalism, and organized political activism is still met with institutional violence. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Native American people across the country organized, demonstrated, and protested - determined to protect their political, cultural, and land rights. The desire to depose the 'puppet governments' elected by the 'Indian Reorganization Act' (1934) in favour of more traditional forms of government was gaining ground on many reservations, and the American Indian Movement, formed in 1968 in Minneapolis, forced the message into the political arena. It finally seemed

that the system of colonial governance so carefully developed over such a long period was starting to come undone. After the massive resistance at the village of Wounded Knee on the Sioux reservation in 1973, Cherokee artist and poet Jimmie Durham became a full-time AIM activist, because:

> the U.S. put American Indians in a situation where we had to respond .... Besides being a clear responsibility that I couldn't ignore, I thought we would win .... perhaps by the mid-eighties .... a time when so much of Africa had gotten out from under European colonialism .... we thought we might get somewhere. Instead we lost more than we started with. We went backwards in time and history.
> (Jimmie Durham, 1995, p. 224)

Jean Fisher has suggested that "without access to the existing structures of power, strategies of survival and renegotiation are limited to the manipulation of the rhetorical space of dominant culture." (Fisher, 1991, p. 310) For Native Americans today artistic practices cannot be dissociated from political activism; access to one's own representation means access to a power base from which to negotiate one's own subjectivity.

Conclusion

"Native American artists do not dissociate the question of personal (Indian) identity from land rights struggles, repatriation of cultural material, and the need for adequate health care, jobs, and housing. Increasingly, Native artists' search for self is being replaced by a search for forms, images, and techniques that will engage cultural difference at a level that produces tangible political results."

W. Jackson Rushing, 1990.

Jimmie Durham was one of the first Native American artists to fail the new legal tests enforced by the 'Indian Arts and Crafts Act' (1990). A show of his work which had already been on exhibition at 'Exit Art' in New York was scheduled for July 1991 at the Center for Contemporary Art in Santa Fe. Another show scheduled for the same time was to be held at American Indian Contemporary Arts, San Francisco. Both were cancelled due to the artists lack of certification. He responded with an open letter which addressed the indignity of such a stipulation.[11] Firstly, Native Americans are the only people in the U.S. (and possibly the world) whose artistic identity is legislated by the state rather than by self-determination. Secondly, Jimmie Durham and his peers would surely be reluctant to define their art as 'Indian', or otherwise. 'Indian art' is, after all, art about Euro-Americans, because Euro-American society establishes what counts as 'Indian'.

The 'Indian Arts and Crafts Act' (1990) is a new mechanism of 'enclosure' which restricts the already limited possibilities for self-representation,[12] and prevents people from making a living. The terms employed are part of a romantic colonial vocabulary developed to maintain oppression. Jimmie Durham claims that the "authenticity of officially sanctioned 'Indian art' is a trap to limit the cultural power of the Native American artist." (Shiff, 1992, p.77) Utilization of the stereotypical symbols, and nostalgic depictions, which

Euro-American culture has deemed to be 'Indian,' acquire a mass-culture value which will never be taken seriously, that is, critically.

Unfortunately, 'Indian art' is representative of 'Native American art' to many people, and so contemporary Western art practices are considered to be a less valid means of expressing experience for Native American artists. This highlights a huge discrepancy in the treatment, and evaluation, of Western and non-Western art forms, and an impulse to segregate and compartmentalize practices and cultural forms which have influenced each other for the last 500 years.

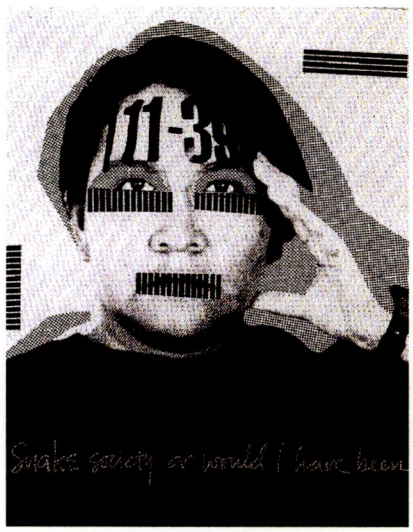
Today Native American artists feed on the Euro-American culture that they too are a part of, appropriating what is needed, but relying still on Native ideas and traditions. There is no such thing as a Native American who remains uninfluenced by the history of colonialism in the U.S.; the notion as absurd. As Jimmie Durham has pointed out, Native Americans "speak - and must live in the world created by - the language and discourse of the colonizing Euro-Americans."[13] (Shiff, 1992, p.75) The appropriation of useful aspects of the dominant society is considered to be a valid Native American activity, according to Jimmie Durham "one of our valued traditions is to use the best possible weapons to fight our oppressor," (Jimmie Durham, 1974, p.9) whether that be a rifle, or a camera.

Through their choice of medium and a critical position Native American photographers are not only challenging Western expectations of 'authentic Indian art', but attacking the foundations of ethnocentric culture. They do not follow the established image of a 'vanishing race', but show that Native Americans exist in the 20th century. Their deconstruction and disarmament of the abundant imagery created by Euro-Americans, and its replacement with Native-conceived self-imagery, offers an invitation to consider the relationship between Native American subjectivity and the narratives of Euro-American history. As Gerald McMaster has pointed out, in spite of oppressive legislation, "history shows that Native peoples have demonstrated

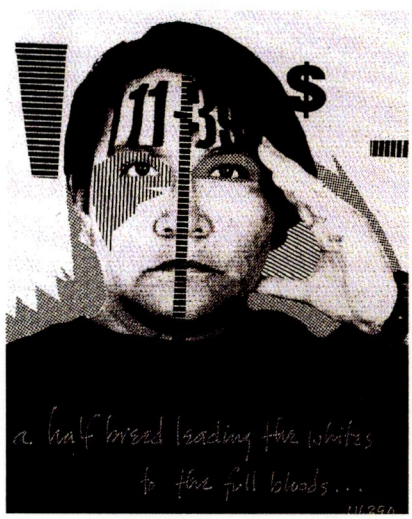
remarkable resistance to the centuries of forced change and continue to do so," (McMaster, 1992, p.72).

Craig Owens taught us something invaluable about 'the indignity of speaking for others.' "It is precisely in being represented by the dominant culture that these groups have been rendered absences within it." (Owens, 1992, p.262) Without offering any new 'essentialism,' or claims to 'truth,' the Native Americans whose photographic work follows (Figs. 11 to 21), are defiantly asserting their right to self-representation. Explanations and interpretations from outside the culture are both unnecessary and undesireable impositions, which only serve to negate their significance.

Figure 11.



'Would I have been a member of the Nighthawk, Snake Society, or would I have been a half-breed leading the whites to the full-bloods?'



Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, 1991

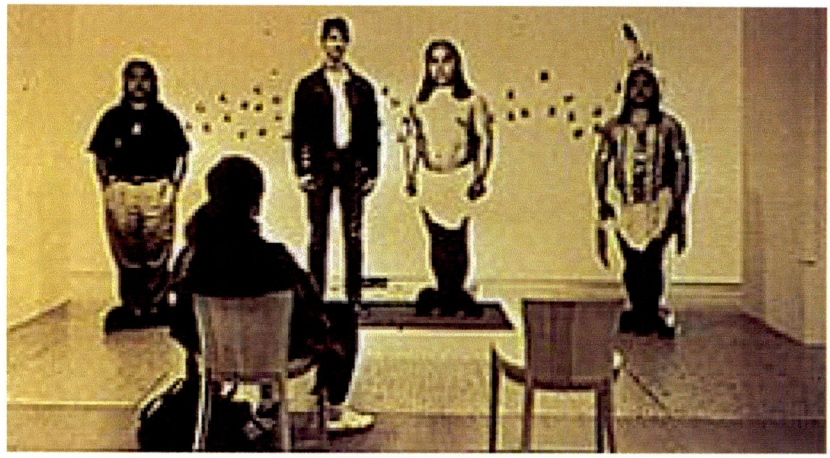
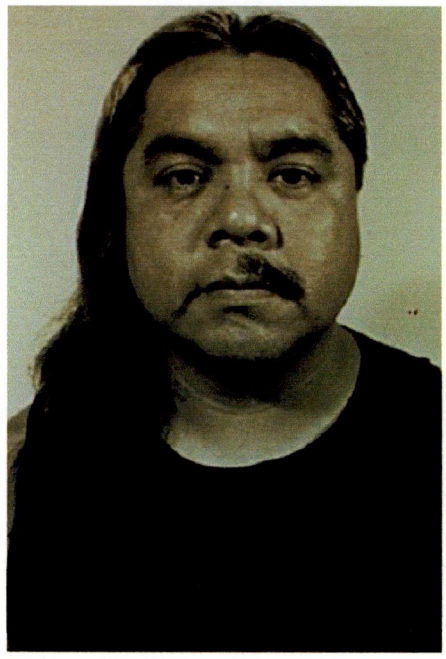


Figure 12.

'Take a Picture With a Real Indian,' James Luna, 1991



"And then theres the question of what's an Indian? Who's an Indian? If you're part Indian, what's the other part? How does that influence you? Does it make you less, does it make you more?"

(James Luna, in interview with Steven Durland, 1991)

Figure 13.

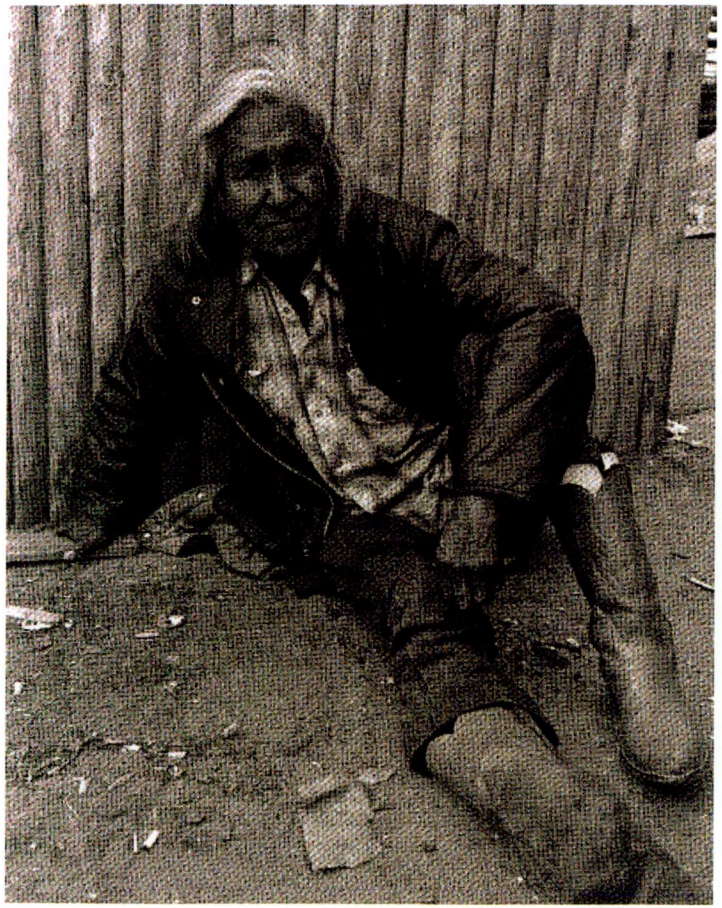
'1/2 Luiseno / 1/2 Mexican,' James Luna, 1991

Figure 14.

'The Rebel,' Shelley Niro, 1987

Figure 15.

'The Iroquois is a Highly Developed Matriarchal Society,' Shelley Niro, 1991



"The United States is built on dispace-ment...on making the host people, Native Americans, homeless"

(Richard Ray Whitman, cited in Scoates, 1992)

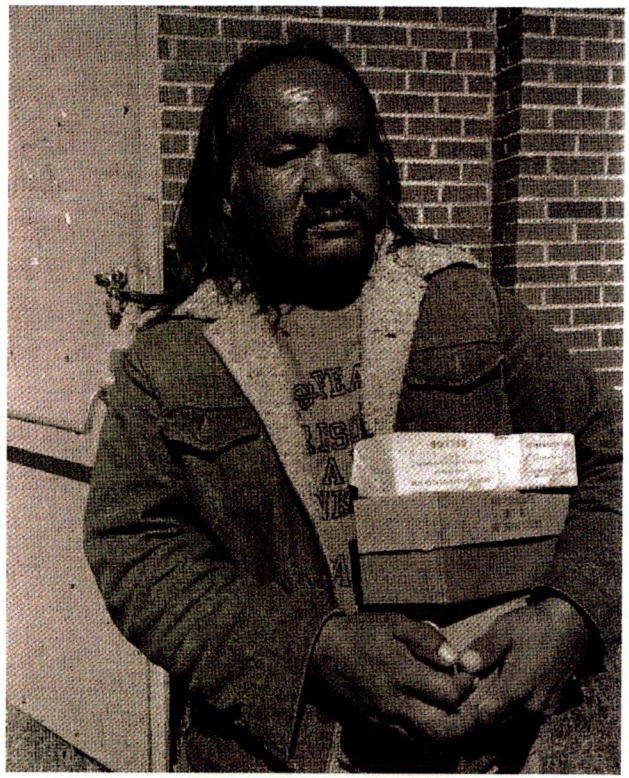


Figure 16.

'Walter Straight,' Richard Ray Whitman, 1985
From the 'Street Chiefs Series'

Figure 17.

'The Great Commodity Give-Away,' Richard Ray Whitman, 1985
From the 'Street Chiefs Series'

Figure 18.

'Indian Photographing Tourist Photographing Indian,'
Zig Jackson, 1993

Figure 19.

From the 'Indian Man in San Francisco Serie,' Zig Jackson, 1991

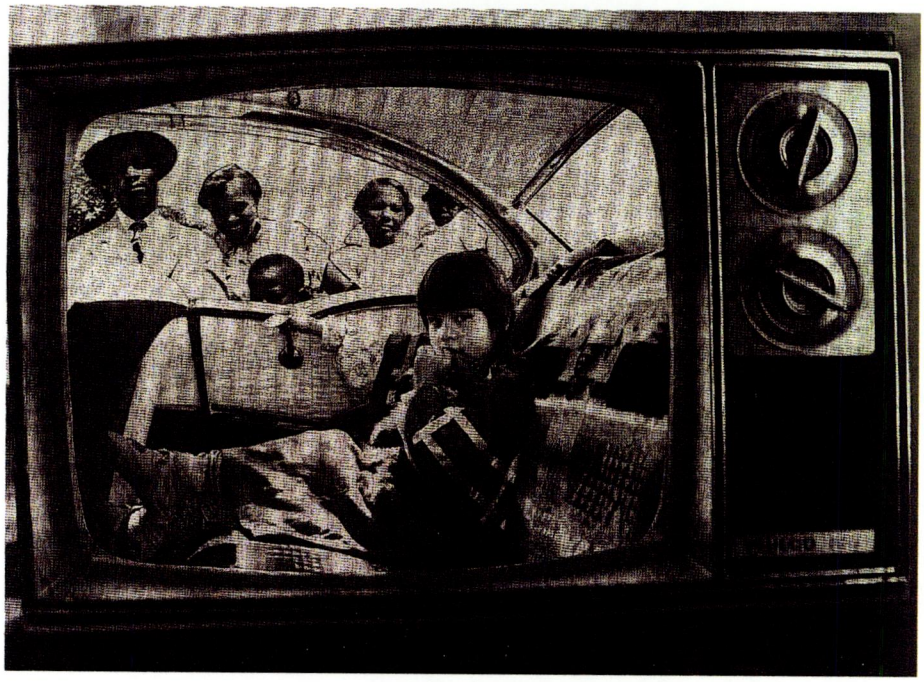


Figure 20.

'Mattie Looks For Steve Biko,' Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, 1990

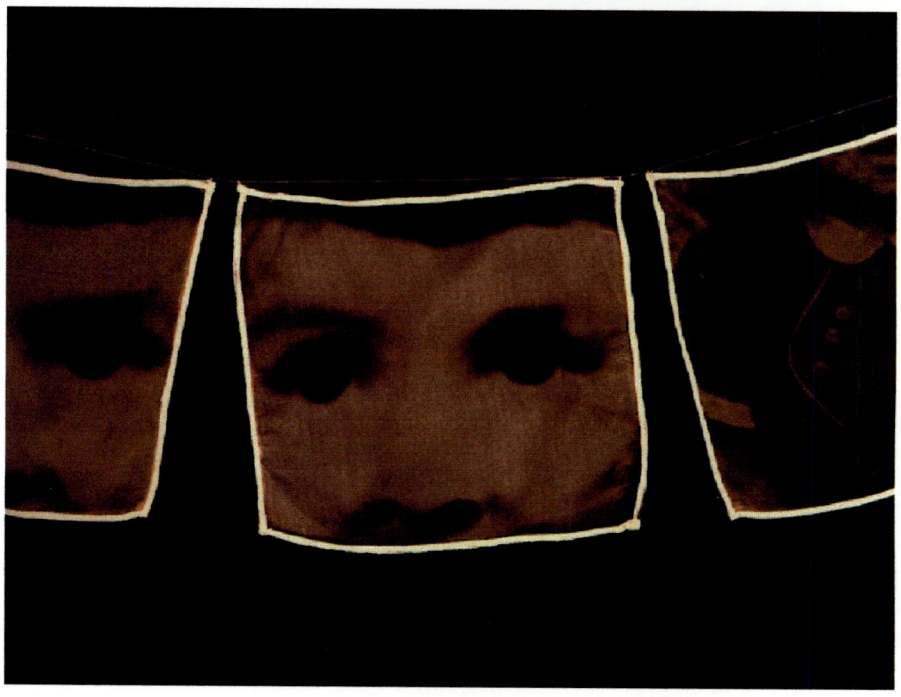


Figure 21.

'Blood, Rust, and Hair,' Pamela Shields Carroll, 1994

Footnotes

1

J.J. Brody's book "Indian Art, White Patrons" elaborates how these stylistic forms, were approved for a particular market during the 20s and 30s.

2

I am particularly indebted to Robert Berkhofer; Jean Fisher; and M. Annette Jaimes, whose work has been invaluable to this paper.

3

For a succinct overview of important statutes and cases that are key to understanding the federal-Native American relationship, see Ward Churchill and Genn T. Morris "Key Indian Laws and Cases in M. Annette Jaimes, Ed., pp. 13-21.

4

See the code of Federal Regulations, Title 25, Volume 1, Part 1, (revised April 1, 1997). From the U.S. Government Printing Office via GPO access. CITE: 25CFR309

5

I am indebted to Robert Berkhofer, who, in his 1978 book "The White Man's Indian," goes to great lengths to justify this point. Detailed accounts and descriptions are used to trace the historical conception and creation of the 'Indian,'and these ideas and images are related to 'theoretical' and 'practical' 'Indian' policy, both before, and after 'Independence.'

6

Bernadette Bucher, in her book Icon and Conquest: A Structural Analysis of De Bry's Great Voyages, (Chicago, University of Chicago press 1981), comments that the first-hand accounts of the people encountered were subsequently distorted by European engravers. The introduction of Northern Renaissance ideals, and of demons and grotesques, coincide with the contemporary religious and political power struggles in Europe.

7

America's people were defined as savage because of their lack of 'Scripture'. The 'Word' was the law - outside it Native Americans were illegible and illegal.

8

Frederick Jackson Turners: "Frontier Thesis", which was one of the most important papers delivered before the American Historical Association in 1893, tied this view in so nicely with American images of their own social progress that it was conveyed in basic American history textbooks in schools and colleges across the country until at least half way through the 20th century - and the premises of this thesis were not challenged until after World War Two.

9

This metaphor was the result of a population decimation which has been extreme. In 1492 there were between 20 and 35 million Native Americans in what is now the U.S., (around 100 million in North America). By official census counts, today there are about $1\,^1/_2$ million Native American people living in the U.S.

10

But many other countries have followed suit. When South Africa claimed there were no Africans in the area until after the arrival of settlers, they were following the U.S. model. Both countries dominated their Native hosts by establishing 'reserves'/'homelands' and relocating their indigenous populations; a system which, in South Africa, which makes the American moral indignation over 'apartheid' seem hypocritical, to say the least.

11

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12

Unfortunately opportunities for exhibitions of Native American photography usually result from sponsorship of non-profit, Native-run organizations, and within an anthropological or historical, rather than a 'fine art' context.

13

Today there are many Native Americans whose first language is English, and many others who do not speak any Native language.

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