National College of Art and Design.

Faculty of Fine Art, Department of Sculpture.

"The Exploration of Identity through the work of Jimmie Durham, Large Art Festivals and Distant Relations"

by

David Hayes

"Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complementary Studies in Candidacy for the Degreee of Honors BA in Fine Art Sculpture 1998"

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

Acknowledgements.

I would like to thank my Thesis tutor Niamh O'Sullivan for her help with sorting through the text and arranging it a professional manner. I would also like to thank my dear friends Anne and Peter.

And when we look in through the windows, all we see are shadows. And when we try and listen, all we hear is a whispering. And we cannot understand the whispering , because our minds have been invaded by war. A war that we have won and lost. The very worst sort of war. A war that captures dreams and re-dreams them. A war that has made us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves.

Arundhati Roy

Introduction

This chapter serves as a preface to the issues that shall be dealt with within this paper, examining the historical aspects relating to ideas of identity. Chapter two deals with Jimmie Durham an internationally acclaimed artist, writer and poet of Cherokee descent. His intricate sculptures and installations mimic the attributes of humans and animals, and the ways they make or are made into history. Durham's collages, discarded objects and fragments of organic matter, are transformed with dazzling colour into startling, anthropomorphic configurations. His sculptures, wall based collages and ersatz ethnographic displays deliver ironic assaults on the colonising procedures of Western culture and weave a complex thread of puns, poetry and political invective. Durham has a diverse history, including full-time activism within the American Indian Movement, later becoming a United Nations Representative from 1975-79. Returning in 1985 to practice full-time as an artist he exhibited extensively including his participation in Documenta IX in 1992 and working with artists such as Guillermo Gomez Pena and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha in the touring Exhibition, Mistaken Identities in the same year. Within Durham's work there is a fierce resistance to the reductive terms of all eurocentrically generated debates on cultural difference. Central to his arguments is the way the English language and the visual representations of dominant white society are used to manipulate history, the law, and cultural identities-the alliance between the discourses of ethnic and cultural authenticity, colonialism and racism. Durham serves as an anchor within this paper and his ideas and work are central to the debate. Chapter three exposes the power within visual representations through analysis of large cultural festivals. It shall illustrate the ways in which visual representations are manipulated by nation states to generate new social and political meanings. Chapter four deals with Distant Relations: A Dialogue Among Chicano Irish and Mexican Artists, an exhibition curated by Trisha Ziff,as an alternative approach within the exhibition framework to the question of identity, which allows

for a more contemporary and pluralist voice. It was an attempt to bring together the work of artists from two countries on different continents, with the view to open up a new discussion about cultural difference. It attempted to illustrate that Ireland and Mexico had much in common; by juxtaposing work by artists of Irish and Mexican decent it would encourage audiences to question stereotypical assumptions, and to explore with an open mind similarities and differences of response to cultural situations through the work of living artists. The intention was never to illustrate a theory about identity, but to give artists the space to contribute in whatever way they felt appropriate, in short, to provoke discussion on the issues on which one ruminates constantly-art, culture, and identity. Selecting two artists from the show, Ruben Ortiz-Torrez and Philip Napier, the intention is to identify within their works similarities relating to the discourse surrounding identity. Both artists explore similar ideas relating to memory and the need to acknowledge the history of the colonial experience. This paper serves to illustrate that the discourse surrounding identity has two important factors that must always be included if the discussion is to advance, the need for the debate to be historically specific and the understanding that identity cannot be a fixed idea.

Chapter One
Historical Specifics

In order to understand the issues raised by Durham, and other artists, it is important to look closely at the construct of identity being conferred. In this section, the historical aspects of identity are examined within the context of the colonial repression of indigenous cultures. This chapter emphasises the fact that these cultural identities were deconstructed under colonial powers, and in the ensuing void the culture of the dominant identity took over. This process was not a peaceful, harmonious one, it was built on oppression and violence. In order for European culture to come into place, it denied the suppressed culture a legitimate historical and political space. Frantz Fanon, who has written in response to Jean Paul Sarte's relativizing of ' negritude' in his reading of the historical process, has recognised that a path to the realisation of black selfhood lay in

unravelling the politics of a psychic economy that coerced the colonised person into a masquerade of identification with the white European and his (mis)recognition of black subjectivity perceived on the level of the body image. (Fisher;1992,p.45)

It was this blackness, this difference, which challenged Eurocentric narratives of an ideal, unitary self-identity. In the same way, European perception of American indigenous peoples, and the seemingly unbounded wilderness, clearly provoked a fear of loss of ego boundaries that had, somehow, to be brought under control. Even now, in an era described as post-colonial, which purports to encompass a plurality of voices, indigenous peoples remain bound to state paternalism that is more disciplinary than benevolent. In The Location of Culture (1994), Homi Bhabha suggests,

the colonial other arises in the space of ambivalence: between the coloniser's narcissistic identification with what she or he sees as a reflection of an ideal unified

image of the self (the radical otherness of the native). These two forms of identification constitute the dominant strategy of colonial power exercised in relation to a stereotype which, simultaneously disavows or masks it. This relates to the Freudian narcissistic self, fearing loss of ego integrity, goes out from itself, but not into otherness; it remains one with itself, having simply interjected into its sphere the spatially distinct object. (Fisher;1992,p.45)

Michael Rogin has noted this interjection, pointing out the inscribed familiar pathology present in Anglo-Indian relations that casts the state in the role of the father and the Indians as children.

In the white fantasy, Indians remain bound in the oral stage , sustained by and unseperated from mother nature. They are at once symbols of lost childhood bliss and as bad children, repositories of murderous negative projections. Adult independence wreaks vengeance upon its own nostalgia for infant dependence. The Indians tie with mother nature must be broken, literally by up rooting him, figuratively by civilising him, finally by killing him.....In relation to Indians, whites regressed to the most primitive form of object relation, namely the annihilation of the object through oral interjection. (Rogin ,1978 p.138-39,)

Jean Fisher in her essay In search of the Inauthentic(1992) points out the difference of repression of the Native American from that of the Indian under British rule. The latter infiltrated an existent hierarchical Indian society with a civil and legal organisation administered by a subaltern class schooled in the British way of life. Yet the introjective gaze of the United States colonialism stages the Native American not as the partial presence of Bhabha's mimic man of the British Raj, but as a disappearance - he is almost the same but not quite, rather he is not there at all. He has vanished, later to be mourned or resurrected through a constant return to the signs of his once having been there. This gives rise to institutional obsession with tribal artefacts, which began with Augustus Henry Lane Fox (later Pitt Rivers) founder and patron of the Pitt Rivers Museum. By the comparison of artefacts from

different periods and places, in particular the 'commoner class of objects', he sought to establish historical sequences which visibly mapped technological development and small alterations in form over time. He believed that only through the 'persistence of forms' could one

show that disparate peoples possessed common traits, and thus re-establish their past connection (Chapman,1985, p. 23).

Lane Fox believed that arranging the artefacts in a sequence would illustrate that the technological sophistication of the objects represented the intangible aspects of culture. What distinguishes Pitt Rivers' approach is the fact that the classificatory and evaluatory schema that it invokes is seen as 'scientific', where this refers to a positivistic framework of knowledge, and where the representation (the method of display) reinforces and derives from the evolutionary discourse that frames it. The Pitt Rivers Museum, it could be argued, at this historical juncture (the late nineteenth-century) promoted and legitimised the reduction of cultures to objects, so that they could be judged and ranked in a hierarchical relationship with each other. This anthropological - or more properly, ethnographic - discourse did not reflect the real state of the cultures it exhibited so much as the power relationship between those that were subjected to such classification and those promoting it.

Chapter Two
Jimmie Durham

Jimmie Durham parodied the obsession of collecting and displaying in his piece, On loan from the museum of the American Indian in which he displayed a series of artefacts with printed labels and notes in a museum vitrine. Photographs of 'An Indian leg bone', 'Real Indian blood' and a series of map diagrams showing, 'Current trends in Indian land ownership' a story about death by dehydration (a reference to Indian water rights), presented a portrait of a body dismembered and reassigned to the dead space of a museum. Despite the absurdity of the items, their signs of indianticity led the viewers to mistake them for the genuine articles, missing the parodic humour in this mime of the ethnographic gaze. Durham is exposing the ambivalence of accepted signs of indianicity, providing a commentary on the primacy of vision as the medium of knowledge or authenticity in the Western Symbolic Order, and its assumptions that the signifier and the signified are analogous. The landscape in which Durham works is an ever-changing one, yet through his adaptability as writer, sculptor, performance artist and critic he is one of a hand-full of 'minority' artists who have infiltrated the homogenous Western Art World. It is through his understanding of the imposed language that he plays with the disparity between authorities of identity, remaining within them but not defined by them, and so shows up the designation 'American Indian' as a fictional identity. Yet Durham is careful not to stand still, whatever he does he is pursued by the voracious appetites of the dominant culture which wants not only his land, his art and his culture, but almost his soul. So he has become the classic 'moving target', doubling back, crossing his paths, contradicting and confusing those on his trail.....as well as himself. Jaki Irvine on the Durham installation at the ICA in London Original Re Runs (1994) identifies this confusion. The layout of the show gave the ICA site a life of its own; the exhibition created, in the first instance, an encounter with its space, so that one became aware of the space as a consciously

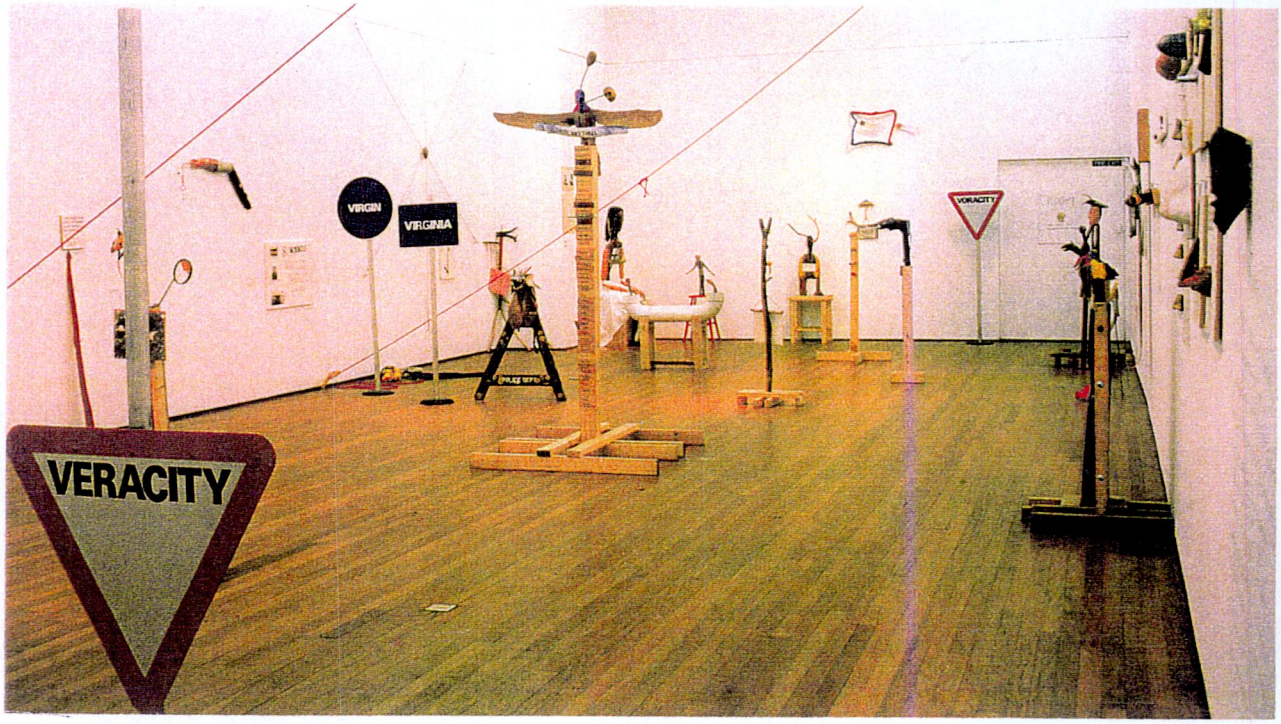

Fig 1 Orignal Re-Runs, 1993, Installation, ICA, Lndon

produced environment before encountering the individual objects within it. The exhibit took on a momentum which carried one through a gallery space which had become a customised and vitalised one. The exhibition had several ropes stretching down from the very top of the walls to coil around the floor. As the ropes dissected the empty areas of the gallery, dead or invisible spaces acquired an extra dimension. A visual and physical topography materialised that made itself felt and then had to be negotiated on the ground. The gallery had to be manoeuvred with consideration and an awareness that was implicit rather than directed. Empty areas were drawn into a general spatial relation and the works were encountered, almost stumbled across, in a casual mapping with its own hidden agendas. While the organisation of the gallery integrated the sculptures and their surrounding space, it was also broken up by a series of signs that suggested confrontation rather than negotiation. In short, one's perception of the space evoked a disorientating impact while the objects maintained a power to force thought and challenge sight, almost imperceptibly, with a kind of careless, throw away style. Irvine compares Durham's on-going series of refusals, slippages and puns as reminiscent of Kristeva's writings about the possibility of disrupting the dominant Symbolic Order through the above devices which, she argues, might be understood as a return of the repressed. It is, however, based on a certain acceptance of the dominance of the symbolic order which bestows meaning and coherence to these disruptions as precisely and little more than that, disruptions, brief glitches which may only reaffirm the authority of the dominant system. Irvine sees the dilemma which Durham is playing out in a number of different but related ways throughout the show, and is left with the impression of variation-on-a-theme, from one work to the next. This finally leads her to experience the work as symptomatic of the condition it is ostensibly trying to dismantle. Whether this is true or not, Durham recognises the confusion and in the accompanying leaflet express his thoughts.

Perhaps we must trust confusion more, for a while, and be deeply suspicious of simple acts. (Irvine,1994 p.78)

This confusion is central to Durham's work, by confusing past and present images, and mixing oppositions, he both plays to and refuses the given identities of Indian. The primitive jars with the technological, the warrior with the innocent, nature with physics, and fact with fantasy. No conclusions are given, indeed tension is built up because each conceivable identity is put forward and then ridiculed. By daring the audience to find his juxtapositions odd, (or worse, un-Indian) he forces us to question assumed meanings and to participate in constructing new methapors which do not compound the silence forced upon native peoples. His interweaving of times and spaces defies any rigid signification of 'Indian' or the authorised history of the coloniser, but at the same time exceeds a pluralistic one as affirmations of identity are interrupted and the disavowals mocked. For Durham, 'Identity' lives within all contributing histories and relationships, yet is not fixed by any of them. This temporality is echoed when Stanley Aronwitz refers to George Herbert Mead's theory on identity, where Mead states that the theory of relativity has

Abolished absolute space and absolute time, substituting relative spaces and times within which objects move. Each object has its own space/time, which is constantly in motion. The relation of any two bodies is always a four-way interaction, so that even the object(self) is never identical to itself. Its identity can be apprehended only in relation to its own space/time and the space/times with which it intersects. "Identity" is the name we give the product of this intersection and it is, necessarily, always temporary and relative to the process-or, more specifically, to the events that constitute it. (Aronwitz 1992 p.95)

Durham's use of materials recognises the importance of history, his materials preserve their own presence as objects, so that the original shapes and textures enter into new configurations in his sculptures. A completed Jimmie Durham sculpture remains 'unfinished'. The same could be said for Marcel Duchamp who in 1913 placed a bicycle wheel on a kitchen stool to make a sculpture, both objects still preserved a continuity with their previous existence but had undergone radical transformation. In his essay Creativity and Social Process Durham wrote,

In one of my more famous theories about sculpture (famous, that is, among the voices inside my head; it has never been made public except in some bars), I explain that what a sculptor does is change objects. We take a stone or pieces of metal or plastic and rearrange them to make some order, or non-order, that satisfies us in some way. After Duchamp, this re-arranging can often simply be a matter of placing an object in a different way or in a different place than we would normally expect to see it, or by concentrating it with a signature.....from this perspective we could substitute, 'he created a new piece' for'' she changed another object'. The implied question would always be, 'Why did she change that object and what does it have to do with me?. (Durham, 1993 p.69-70)

The process is a social one as the object is put into a dialogue with its audience. Durham takes it a step further, for he incorporates the Duchampian idea into his own practice, where he not only questions the function of art but his function as an Indian within a dominant culture. There is an irony in, for instance, Jimmie Durham's work being exhibited within, and constrained by, the gallery system when a mocking irreverence of such limitations is central to his work. By crossing boundaries and using performance, installation and an indefinable mix of painting, sculpture and the written word, Durham succeeds in subverting both the idea of fixed identity and the fixed category of art. For Durham, the possibility of identity and the possibility of art are the same question. Like identity, art is unresolved, Durham has stated

I think there is no time, I think it is a funny invention, there is a duration of things. If a piece of history of a people doesn't get resolved, it's not history in the sense of historical conflicts, it's the present.....when something gets resolved then it's the past, until it's resolved then it is the present, it's always the present. (Gisbourne, 1994 p.11)

Durham's work Caliban confirms that things have not changed much, he casts himself as Caliban (the enslaved servant of Prospero in Shakespeare's The

Tempest) and in doing so accomplishes several things. He splices himself into the seventeenth-century as artist/appropriator/time-bandit, jumping through time, kidnapping Shakespeare's Caliban to resuscitate him, and make him speak at the end of the twentieth-century. Durham thus moves Caliban's dilemma from the margins of cultural discourse, a mere footnote in English literature, to the centre of the West's struggle for identity. The work takes the form of diary entries and pencil drawings, small groupings of sculptures of brass and mud and some found objects. They, like many of Durham's works, are humble in form and material, child-like and somehow incomplete.

*A savage can't, or won't make fine art. As an authorised savage it is my custom and my job to attack. (Lippard; 1993 p.*68)

In the work Caliban attempts to draw his nose and by extension his entire identity. Durham's Caliban is a slapstick image of the savage attempting to render himself without reflection. Caliban's failing attempts to draw his own nose are both funny and heart breaking. The drawings are childish, the lines are wobbly and the grimacing mouths tighten with concentration. Caliban tries hard to be a good student!, how is he to know himself, ripped as he is from his historical and cultural context ?. He can only define himself in relation to his inventor, Prospero, but by using the language of his inventor he digs himself deeper into the hole of signification in which he is trapped. This is the paradox, not just for Caliban but for Durham, as he regards the Art World. How can Durham make images and objects with any faith when their reading will be predetermined by his identity as a Native American?. The threat exists that each drawing Caliban makes of himself erases that which was. The sculptural pieces in the work continue Caliban's attempts at self-portraiture. A brass nose and a mud nose bring into play other ideas and associations; the metal nose reiterates Caliban's inferiority complex referring to how the West has always measured cultural sophistication in terms of metals utilised (stone age, bronze age, etc.) the mud nose refers to a list that Caliban made with Prospero's instructions, to pair all things light(good) and all things dark(bad). On a

Fig 2. Untitled Calibans Mask1992, glass eyes, button, mud,pvc pipe, glue 24x15.6x4.8

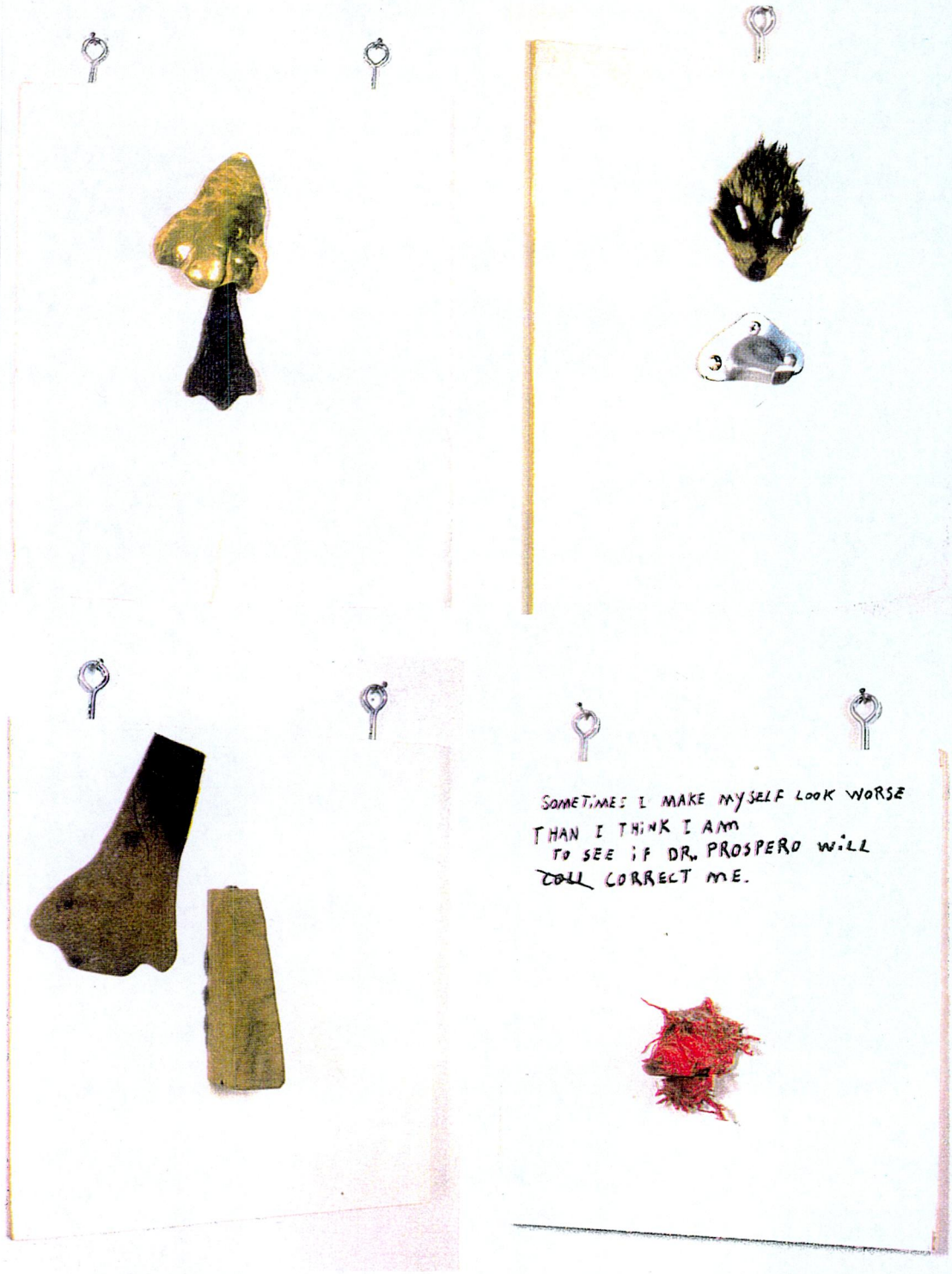

Fig 3. l. to r., **Untitled** 1992 Brass, mud, glue, wood 49.2x38.4x6cm

Untitled 1992 Racoon skin, metal, wood paint 49x38.4x6cm

bottom,l. to r., **Untitled** 1992 Pig skin leather, wood paint 42x36x7.2cm

Untitled 1992 Root, paint, wood 42.6x36x9.6cm

very basic level this raises the inherent racism within the English language itself, and how by adopting the coloniser's tongue, the colonised must inevitably degrade themselves. As Judy Purdom has stated,

The violence of language which inscribes difference and thus hierarchy. (Purdom; 1995 p.25)

In 1983 Durham quoted from the Vocabulary of a Lakota Primer a US book published to educate the children of the Pine Ridge reservation. The vocabulary used by the government gives an insight into official attitudes to Native Americans. They are taught about figures of 'legitimate' authority from the Sheriff to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Young Indians are taught to say "I like the sheriff". These authority figures are mentioned in the same list as the Pope, the Church and Heaven. The most insidious aspect of the vocabulary provided is the focus on the innate "dirtiness" of the Indian children being addressed. Of the twenty-eight words given, sixteen refer to disease and hygiene. For example: "your face is dirty", "comb your hair". Thus the children are 'enlightened' and made to believe that Indianness is innately dirty, and religion and 'legitimate' authority offer the only hope of cleanliness and godliness.

Caliban finally completes an image of himself and he makes a gift of it to Prospero. It is a mask who's skin appears to be cracking earth, with brown and yellow eyes. The mask attempts an uncertain smile over which hovers a button nose. A note accompanying the mask begs Prospero for recognition. Caliban's success becomes a travesty of representation, an absurd demonstration of language internalised; he is mud, he is animal, he is dark and ugly. His quest for identity is really a search for a proper mask to wear in his dance with Prospero. Caliban is lost, but so is Prospero, though if he were to admit this, it would mean to overturn the civilised/savage binary that gives him his power. It is Caliban's task, then to teach Prospero about his own inauthenticity, and the paradoxical naturalness of the artifice. Always incomplete, Durham's work has no beginning or end, there are slippages of logic

and even the formal presentation seems to imply things left undone, it presents the struggle for identity but crucially it does not resolve conflicts but accepts them and keeps them in play.

Durham does not present an 'authentic' culture or a coherent identity, neither is he a living embodiment of a culture otherwise extinct. As both 'Artist' and 'Cherokee', Durham is himself a schism of identity, as it were, and he makes his fragmented identity the focus of his work and a tool with which to question and ridicule the limitations of European cultural narratives, in particular that of 'Art'. Durham refuses both the aesthetics of art as an object of 'disinterestedness' and emotional affect, and the ghetto of Indian Art as ethnic artefact. When we look at Durham's work we are involved in a process of deconstructing our own gaze and cannot come to any conclusion about Durham's message or the status of his work as art. By drawing us towards an identity and then repelling us, our cultural assumptions are questioned and we are left without any authority with which to assess or understand the images. For Durham, art is necessarily political and this translates into art as action, art as intervention, art as irritation.

I think the purpose of art is to help people interpret their world so that they may be better able to change it in a positive way.....We understand cultural activities to be in general positive, and we understand external control of those activities to be insidiously oppressive. (Durham;1993 p.69,)

Durham's discourse on the persistent institutional reduction of Native American arts to ethnographic spectacle has several implications. The widely held view that aesthetics and scholarship are distinct categories with no responsibility to socio-political life means that the institutions controlling such discourses are not obliged to interrogate the ideological assumptions of their own practices, this inevitably and conveniently excludes the voices of contemporary peoples for whom there may be no such category distinctions, and denies their status as historical and political subjects. The emphasis on the pre-modern artefact, decontextualized from its

cultural meaning, reinforces the notion that erases 500 hundred years of ethnocide, that Native America exists in some pre-industrial arcadia perpetually available for rediscoveries. This assumption is echoed by Joan W. Scott in her essay Multiculturalism and the politics of Identity (1992), in which she details a report from the New York State Social Studies Review and Development Committee.(NYSSRDC) The report presents a persuasive case for a multicultural curriculum, arguing, among other things, that democratic participation is enhanced when students understand that change occurs because groups pursue their interests through collective action. Pride in one's heritage is, the report suggests, an important ingredient in citizenship, particularly for those whose identities and view points have been excluded or marginalised in accounts of American history. What the report does not do is conceive of difference as in any way constitutive, and so leaves itself open to a charge delivered by Nathan Glazer (one of the dissenting members of the committee) that ethnicities should not be treated as monolithic and unchanging because that ignores the very real history of assimilation into American culture. Glazer's argument, that the ideas of identities contained in the report create a dangerously divided reality, is eminently political; by asserting the essential unity of the identity of America, it underplays the extent to which the process of difference and discrimination have structured (and continue to structure) American life. The report assumes that people are discriminated against because they are already different when in fact it is the other way round.

Difference and the salience of different identities are produced by discrimination, a process that establishes the superiority or the typicality of the universality of some in terms of inferiority or atypically or particularly of others (Scott;1992 p.14-15)

Yet a conflict arises when one considers Stanley Aronwitz's argument in Reflections on Identity (1992) in which he proposes that the older theories have tended to posit society and the individual as fixed, when one is in motion the other is at rest. We may now regard the individual as a process constituted by its multiple and specific relations, not only to institutions of socialisation such as the family,

school and law but also to significant others, all of whom are in motion and constantly changing. The ways in which the individual and the groups to which they affiliate were constituted as late as a generation earlier may now be archaic. New identities arise, old ones pass away (at least temporarily). In a sociological context this would seem to be the case, yet as the report would suggest from the NYSSRDC the hierarchical ideologies have not advanced in relation to Aronwitz's thinking. However, the critical discourse surrounding the debate on identity has progressed in recent times, and an educational structure established within universities has exposed the exclusions that have structured claims to universal or comprehensive knowledge.

Chapter Three

Large Art Festivals

Since the publication of Edward Said's Orientalism in 1978, cultural theorists have become increasingly aware of the manufactured nature of national identity and the extent to which that identity is constructed through cultural representations. Using multicomponent cultural festivals as a form of cultural diplomacy is the latest development in a long history of propagandistic uses of art exhibitions. These art festivals indicate a more aggressive assertion of nationalism, as well as a willingness to manipulate the manifold powers of the culture industry. In an era when global extension and international flows of capital and information, along with the disintegrative forces of separatism, have made the nation seem like a threatened species, national cultural festivals are a strong indication of the replacing of the imagery of that political identity. The art exhibitions these festivals embrace, in particular, demonstrate the drive to reassert nationalism as a sort of decoy. Visual representations are a key element in symbolising and sustaining national communal bonds. Such representations are not just reactive, they are also purposefully creative and they can generate new social and political meanings. Through the engineered over-production of certain types of images, or the censorship of suppression of others, and through controlling the way images are viewed (or by determining which are preserved), cultural representations can be used to produce a certain view of a nation. Stuart Hall recognises this when he states

We often think of power in terms of direct physical coercion or constraint. However, we have also spoken, for example, of power in representation, power to mark, assign and classify; of symbolic power; of ritualised expulsion. Power it seems has to be understood here not only in terms of economic exploitation and physical coercion, but also in broader cultural or symbolic terms, including the power to represent someone or some thing in a certain way- within a certain regime of representation. It includes the exercise of symbolic power through representation.(Hall,1997p.259)

In most developing countries today government-imposed ideals of a homogeneous nationalism is strongly challenged by a wide-range of racial, ethnic and religious factions. This can be better understood when we look at the Festival of Indonesia (1991) held in San Francisco which originally focused their two principal art exhibitions rather narrowly on classical Indonesian sculpture and on the elite court arts. A major objection was that these two approaches ignored the culture of the Indonesian Muslims, although Muslims account for ninety percent of Indonesia's population. Finally, an ethnographic exhibition was added, Beyond the Java Sea. Even with three full-scale exhibitions, in addition to nearly one hundred events, the Festival of Indonesia failed to address many contemporary issues, political, environmental and cultural. The festival sought to give renewed prominence to 'the world's largest invisible country', but at the same time hoped to extinguish America's most prevailing image of Indonesia, the Cold War client state that was ruled by the dictator Sukarno until he was forcibly ousted in 1965. Yet the current government, it seems, seeks to continue a regime that infringes human rights in the disputed province of East Timor, and in the province of Acehon Sumatra. Wide spread decimation of Indonesian rainforests and questionable labour practices within the country have prompted contemporary artists to speak out, only to find them selves censored. In order to interject such realities into the euphoric nationalism of the Indonesian Festival, one sponsor, the Ford Foundation, gave a $100,00 grant to the Social Science Research Council for an independent series of lectures that would reflect a range of opinions on Indonesia. Toby Volkman, staff associate of the Council said

We felt that the thrust of the festival was an Indonesian government attempt to present Indonesia in a very favourable, uncritical light . Our role as scholars is to be more critical. (Wallis,1995 p.29)

Among the Council projects were a July 1990 conference at Cornell University on "The role of the Indonesian-Chinese in Indonesian life," a workshop on East Timor in April 1991, a feminist conference on women in Indonesia at the University of

Washington and a June panel at the New York Botanical Garden on deforestation in Indonesia. Ted Tanen helped organise the Indonesia Festival. Tanen, Executive Director of the Indo-U.S Subcommission on Education and Culture, who now ironically heads his own firm 'Tanen Associates' which specialises in producing national cultural festivals, claims that he encouraged the organiser of the exhibition, the Natsantara Jaya Foundation, to deal forthrightly with all the issues including human rights and the environment. He argues that scholarly debates, such as the Cornell conference are insider events that can have little effect on the promotional aspects of the festival. Mochtar Kusuma-Atmadga, Indonesia's former Minister of Foreign Affairs and the chairman of the Nutsantara Jaya Foundation, said,

We thought the festival was an occasion to create understanding and friendship, not to create conflict, this is about art, not politics. (Wallis,1995 p.29)

All this points up to a central paradox common to such national exhibitions: in order to establish their status within the international community, individual nations are compelled to dramatise the most conventionalised versions of their own national images, asserting past glories and simplifying stereotypical differences. As we know from the writing of Edward Said and others, Orientalism is a political fiction, a mythic idea of the East based on Western projections of fear. Orientalism is a deformed representation sustained through the misappropriation of the signs of foreigness, often entailing suppression and exclusions, as exemplified by the exhibition, Turkey: The Continuing Magnificence (Washington, Chicago and New York, 1987-88) in which all these ideas were encapsulated, a country subjected to Orientalism chacterisition in the late nineteenth-century was now forced to adopt what might be called a 'Self Orientalizing' mode. Instead of an outside oppressor imposing a stereotypical identity, the nation was proposing to recast itself in that very image. This idea is echoed by Hall in Modernity and its Futures,

Yet they may be also using the nation as the form in which to compete with other ethnic nations, and so gain entry into the rich club of the West. As Immanuel

Wallerstein has actually observed, the nationalism of the modern world are the ambiguous expression for....assimilation into the universal...and simultaneously for ....adhering to the particular, the reinvention of differences. Indeed it is a universalism through particularism and particularism through universalism.(Hall,1992 p.294)

Chapter Four
Distant Relations

In contrast, in the Distant Relations show held in April 1996 in the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) Dublin, the Curator Trisha Ziff attempted to bring together Chicano, Mexican and Irish artists in a provocative juxtaposition. Both nations possessed similarities ranging from an indigenous Roman Catholic spirituality; a poor and vital rural culture; and political resistance fuelled by occupation as exemplified by the continuing "Troubles" in Northern Ireland and the escalating Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas. The real common ground is, however, the retention of a mixed, powerful, and often romanticised identity that lies under the surface of internationalism and modernity, that is manipulated in both popular and "high" culture. What makes Ireland and Mexico so compelling is the ongoing internal and generational reinvention of national identities in conflict with ongoing external cultural and political pressures. For the artists participating in the exhibition *place* would seem to be a secondary theme, as it surfaces within the exhibitions framework of national borders and border-crossing. What becomes apparent through the work is the realisation that a border has no identity of its own, but it is hybrid in itself defined by what it brings together and what it keeps apart. The US/Canadian border has a very different character from the US/Mexican border as does the Irish Republic/Northern Irish border differ greatly from the Irish Republic/British border. Although there are similarities between both Mexico and Ireland it is important to note that parallels could also be drawn between the situation involving the persecution of Tibet by China or the volatile situation between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Drawing a direct parallel between Ireland and Mexico does not work; important distinctions exist, where Ireland is an island,

for example, and its history reflects that geographical fact, Mexico has always been a bridge between continents. Irish art is fundamentally European, Mexican art remains in a central place that resembles a limbo. From a positive viewpoint Mexico is beginning to embrace the Other that it has rejected for so long, incorporating both the cultures of the US and the South American Indian, fusing both cultures. It is here that Distant Relations works unbeknown to its self where an exhibition of nationally defined art suggests transculturation as a goal. As with all the aspects concerning identity , one that seems to transverse the debate is the focus on the past as a means to understanding the present and the possible future. Many of the artists involved insist on the role of memory as a component of resistance against a dominant culture bent on absorbing all difference. As opposed to history, memory would seem to hold that personal element which connects on a communal level as where history tends to be associated with imposition from the outside. It is in this way that many artists hope that memory can subvert, and sometimes change history. Artists that succeed in the area of identity are showing, not saying; they are actively recording meaning in their work and refuse the significations of an imposed language.

I contend that art and literature can 'show' in a way that we cannot 'speak' by presenting different things at the same time and so indicating the complexity 'behind' representation and the impossibility of non hierarchical signification. (Purdom,1995 p.19-20)

The Mexican artist Rubén Ortiz-Torrez work touches on some of the previous ideas explored in relation to Edward Said's thoughts on self-Orientalising. His work is based on the idea that all cultural identity is a hard-won construct of abstractions, such as the images of Mexico as a rural reservoir of popular Catholicism, and of the United States as a theme park of industrial progress. All identity is a political construction. What is significant in this construction of identity is that despite its artificiality, it ends up being assimilated and applied in every day life. Stuart Hall

concurs with this in Representation, Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices, in which he quotes Dyer

The establishment of normalcy (ie what is accepted as 'normal') through social-and stereo-types is one aspect of the habit of the ruling groups....to attempt to fashion the whole of society according to their own world view, value system, sensibility and ideology. So right is this world view of the ruling groups that they make it appear (as it does appear to them) as 'natural' and 'inevitable'-and for everyone-and, in so far as they succeed, they establish their hegemony (Dyer,1977 p.30)

Cuauhtemoc Medina identifies this recasting by maintaining that Rubén Ortiz - Torrez

Bases his work on the idea that all cultural identity is a hard-won construct of abstraction; the cleanness of disturbing aesthetic elements and the freezing of certain features that are raised to the status of cultural principles, such as the images of Mexico as a rural reservoir of popular Catholicism, and of the United States as a theme park of industrial progress. All identity-and the representation of lo mexicano is an exemplary case-is a political construction. But what is significant in this construction of identity is that despite its artificiality, it ends up being assimilated and applied in daily life, creating a constant instability and an abundance of paradoxes.(Medina, Ziff,1996 p.95)

Rubén Ortiz-Torrez's super glossy colour photographs vividly record the cultural miscegenation occurring north and south of the US/Mexican border. Both Los Angles and Tiujana are transient cities changing at a violent pace due to rapid influxes of population, immigration cultures, and foreign capital. In these inter-zones Ortiz-Torrez documents the implosion of Mexican and American traditions to pop culture, from black velvet paintings of E.T., the Hollywood alien, portrayed as Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, to Latino altars depicting Donald duck and the baby Christ side-by- side. Roger Shimomura's work is similar in this respect, his paintings seem to be both in the style of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints and that of

American popart. Disney characters and geishas seem to belong at once to the Japanese and American, as indeed they do; popular American culture is much apart of *sansei* heritage as Japanese motifs, the cultures are neither separate nor do they merge. Shimomura is also creating a new culture which belongs to the specific experience of the third generation Japanese-American. Ortiz-Torrez baseball caps are more than an ironic commentary on the way that emblems of sports teams appropriate cultural stereotypes; they also construct the possibility of a future Mexican-North American identity-one of the conquests and politicisation of mass culture. If these caps were actually fashionable, the cultural industries would circulate not just the stereotypes but the paradoxical and self-critical images of the discourse about identity.

In relation to other exhibitions that deal with 'ethnic' or 'minority' issues Distant Relations seems to have (by its juxtaposition with Ireland) confronted some of the issues central to Chicano Art, that is the mixing of aesthetics with political opinion. In contrast, the exhibition Hispanic Art in the United States (1984-87) curated by John Beardsley and Jane Livingston came under criticism for omitting murals and installations thereby underestimating the overt political dimension of contemporary Hispanic art. Omitting this section of Hispanic visual culture was unfortunate as these successful mural programmes were most significant in reclaiming its history. As the community read the murals they acted as visual chronicles, the work internalised an awareness of the past and activated strategies for the future. Beardsley and Livingston were also criticised for selecting folkloric and primitivistic work, thereby displaying a naive understanding of the interaction of art and ethnic concerns and, furthermore, that the exhibition format stripped the work of the linkage to the social arena that is fundamental to Hispanic art. In the Chicano movement no artistic current is dominant. Figuration and abstraction, political art and referential art, art of process, performance, and video all have adherents and advocates. The thread of unity between the practitioners is a sense of

Fig 4. La X en la Frente/Malcom X cap, 1992 iron on lettering on baseball cap,x7x4"

vitality and continual maturation. The mainstream art circuit (as illustrated in chapter three) continues to uphold rigid and stereotypical notions in its primitivistic and folkloristic categorisations of "ethnic art". Chicano art viewed in its entirety exposes a complex struggle of two dominant strategies vying for ascendancy. On the one hand, there is an attempt to fracture mainstream consensus with a defiant "otherness." On the other hand, there is the recognition of new interconnections and filiations, especially with other Latino groups in the United States. Confronting the dominant culture leads to a recognition that Anglo's visions of Chicanos, and Chicano visions of themselves support and, to an extent, reflect themselves. What this reveals is that Chicano art forms arise from tactical, strategic, and positional necessities. Tomas Ybarra-Frausto states,

A consistent objective of Chicano art is to undermine imposed models of representation and to interrogate systems of aesthetic discourse, disclosing them as neither natural nor secure but conventional and historically determined. (Karp, Lavine, 1997, p.148)

While the word 'hybrid' denotes the historical mix of cultures, it is deceiving in inferring a balanced coming together of two identifiable entities. The experience of hybridity is far more complex and more likely to be a clash of cultures than a comfortable union. Upon arrival in the States the Irish community asserted a need to define themselves as white , if they were not to be reduced to servitude once more. It was within this climate that many Irish sought to identify with the manifest destiny of whiteness, finding a vehicle for their aspirations through political avenues, the Democratic Party being the main outlet. Yet through this intersection they inevitable interjected with an American racial Anglo-Saxonism. Luke Gibbons quotes David Roediger

under other circumstances, Irish American Catholics might not have accepted so keenly the association of nationality with blood- but not ethnicity, which radically conflated them with the otherwise hated English. Yet within the constrained choices

and high risks of ante-bellum American politics such a choice was quite logical.(Ziff, p.62, 1996)

It is this intersection which separates Mexican experience from the Irish, the mixing of Irish Catholicism with supremacist Anglo Saxon ideals of whiteness in the States illustrates the risks in the ideas relating to hybridity. For a Diasporic, post colonial identity assimilating the values of a powerful expansionist culture already built on racism, the problematic ideas about "post-colonial hybritity" reveal themselves. Although this intersection created a racism it would be fair to say that these attitudes were not always present within Irish emigrants. The Irish brought with them a legacy of servitude and ignominy akin to that experienced by native Africans and Americans.

When examining the suggestion made by Durham quoted earlier where he states

if a piece of history of a people doesn't get resolved, it's not history in the sense of historical conflicts, it's the present(Gisbourne,1994 p.11)

one can question the idea of the term "post-colonial" in relation to the Irish experience where post signifies some form of historical closure, while the narrative of Irish history would seem to insist that that is not the case. This incompleteness, inherent within the culture, offers a platform on which identity is open-ended instead of being based on narrow ideals of racial purity.

The work of Philip Napier who features in the exhibition is concerned with many of the same issues that Ortiz-Torrez is dealing with. Napier's piece Ballad no.1 takes the two characteristics of memory, the one contained and legitimised within the confines of the monument and the museum, and the other having to do with collective memory transmitted by popular culture. An accordion mounted on a wall mechanically moving inhaling and expelling air. The accordion acts as a lung, attached to this we see an image of Bobby Sands, the IRA hunger striker who died in 1981. The moans evoke some of the more discordant strains in Irish vernacular culture, signifying traditional music, an area repeatedly attacked by the authorities as

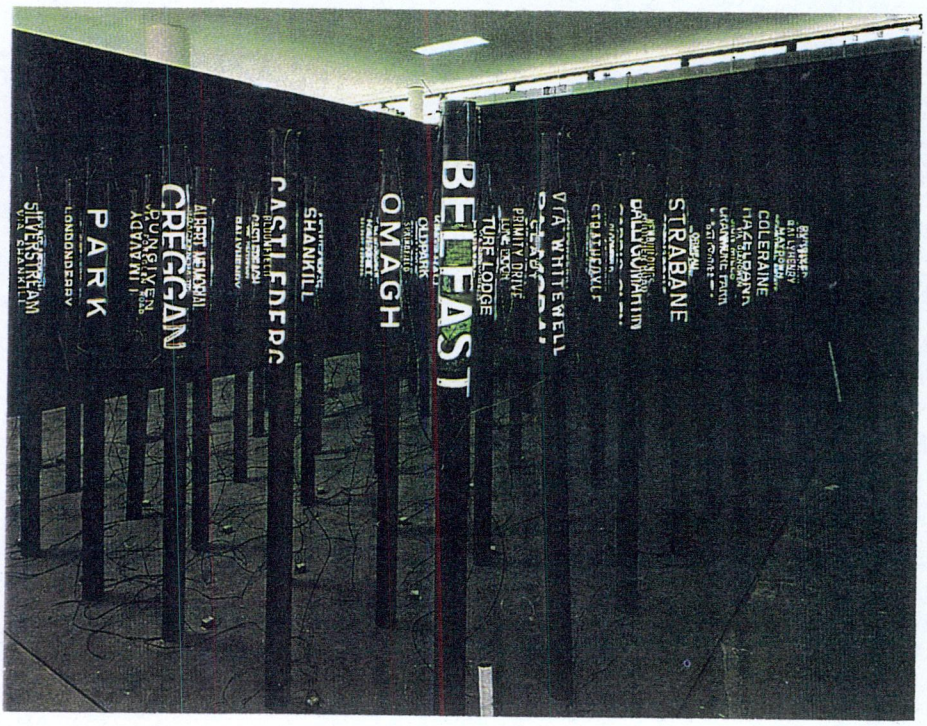

Fig 5. Apparatus II, 1994, mixed media, 9x2' (274x365cm)

a form of insurgence. Napier cleverly connects the mourning rite with the famished body and in doing so creates an extremely rich piece that in effect becomes a living monument. Napier's other work Apparatus II 1994 adopts scroll-like devices used at the front of public buses in Northern Ireland to identify the destination of the route followed. Lenghts of black fabric are wrapped around tubes with the place-names of all the possible destinations in the network painted on in white. Napier has installed the rolls in rows on the floor in a vertical-as opposed to their usual horizontal-position so that the two place-names actually visible on each roll are read on their side. Sounding through each of the tubes in the darkened space is an audio-taped voice stammering the place names. This is not, however, quite what it seems. In Ireland, all non-modern place-names pre-date the predominance of the English language, and most place-names derive from English translations of the eighteen and nineteenth centuries, which were usually mis-translations. The stammering voice in the audio-tape is not naming the places as identified in English on the rolls, but names the places as retranslated from Irish into English. This work is about disjunction between languages.

The language we are speaking is his before it is mine.....His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted his words. My voice holds them at bay. My souls frets in the shadow of his language. (Joyce,1964, p.172)

Different ghosts haunt European and American histories, and memories are oceans apart. Despite global art markets, the culture-specific contemporary arts emerging from Ireland, Mexico, and the US are so unlike each other that what may finally be most interesting about Distant Relations is the dissolution of the original idea. Bringing groups of artists together because of similarities becomes most compelling when centrifugal dissimilarities break them apart again.

Perhaps art about borders is a prelude to reconciliations, to the erasure of borders.

(Ziff, Lippard,1996 p.24)

Conclusion

In conclusion, from examining the discourse about identity we have identified through the work of Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhaba that in order to understand the discourse, it is necessary to look at it historically. Jimmie Durham's work utilises history and forces the Eurocentrically generated debates on cultural difference to acknowledge that cultural identities were deconstructed under colonial powers. The violence inherent within colonialism is also encrypted within the English language, Durham's work Caliban, identifies these issues as does the work of Philip Napier who has shown through the work Apparatus II, that language plays a vital role in understanding ones identity. Predrag Finci quotes Wittegenstein

The boundaries of our language are the boundaries of our world. (Finci, 1995 p.48)

Artists such as Durham who have focused all their attention on the question of identity serve as a reference for all work that deals with these issues. Trisha Ziff's Distant Relation was an interesting attempt to draw artists together who's concerns matched that of Durham's. By involving artists such as Rubén Ortiz Torrez, Ziff began to explore contemporary concerns and indicate how artists must continue to police visual representations which can be used to internalise an awareness of the past and activate strategies for the future. Focusing on the large art festival it is apparent that visual representations are manipulated by nation states, illustrating the mutation of colonialism in the Twentieth-century. Unfortunately post-colonial countries who try to assert their own identity inevitably end up portraying themselves in a stereotypical way in order to gain access into the rich Western market. What becomes apparent from this paper is a constant flux that surrounds the question of identity and the speed at which identity changes. With globalisation and the dropping of borders the question of identity is extremely relevant today, what is important when dealing with this issues is the understanding that identity is fluid, not static, this is central to the debate. If this is not recognised, then we cannot

advance or change social understanding. It is imperative that we have artists such as Durham and exhibitions such as Distant Relations to remind us of this fact.

Bibliography.

Books

Chapman, W.r "Arranging ethnology: A,H.L.F Pitt Rivers and the typological tradition' in Stocking, G.wJr "Objects and Others", London University of Wisconsin Press.

Chattopadhyay, Collette "A conversation with Trisha Ziff, curator" Source Art Week V.27 December 1996.

Durham, Jimmie- "A Certain Lack of Coherence" Kala Press, London 1993.

Edited by Flora E.S Kaplan- "Museums and the Making of Ourselves", Leicester University Press London and New York 1994.

Edited by Karp,Ivan;Lavine, Stephen D, "Exhibiting Cultures, The Poletics and Politics of Museum Display" Smithsonian Institution Press Washington and London 1991.

Edited by Karp, Ivan; Kreamer, Christine Mullen; Lavine, Stephen D, "The Politics of Public Culture" Smithsonian Institution Press Washington and London 1992.

Fanon, Frantz "Black Skin, White Masks" Paladin London 1970.

Foucault, Michael - "Power/Knowledge" (C.Gordon, L. Maeshall, J. Mepham and K. Soper), Hemel Hempstead, Havester Wheatsheaf 1980.

Griswold, Castillo del, Teresa McKenna, Yvonne Yarbro Bejarano- "Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation 1965-1985." Published in conjunction with the exhibition organised by UCLA Wright Art Gallery and the CARA National Advisory-1991.

Hall, Stuart-Held, David-McGrew, Tony- "Modernity and its Futures (Cambridge); Polity Press in Association with Open University, 1992.

Hall, Stuart- "Representation, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices" Sage Publications, London, The Open University, 1997.

Joyce, James "Portrait of a Young Artist" Collins Publishing Group London 1977.

Rogin, Michael "Ronald Regan, the Movie , and Other Episodes in Political Demonology" Berkeley; University of California Press 1978

Roy, Arundhati "The God of Small Things" Flamingo, Harper Collins Publishers, 1997.

Ziff, Trisha "Distant Relations" Smart Press, Santa Monica Museum of Art, 1996.

Articles

Aronwitz, Stanley- "Reflections on Identity" Source; October (Cambridge- Mass.) V.61 Summer 1992.

Finici Predrag, "Refugee Blues" So. Third Text No.30 Spring 1995.

Fisher, Jean- "In Search of the Inauthentic" Source; Art Journal, V.51 Fall 1992.

Gisbourne, Mark- "Jimmie Durham" Source; Art Monthly, No 173, February 1994.

Irvine, Jakie- "Jimmie Durham, Original Re-Runs" Source; Third Text, No. 28/29 Autumn, Winter 1994.

Levi Strauss, David "Distant Relations, Santa Monica Museum of Modern Source Art Forum V.35 January 1997.

Lippard, Lucy R.- "Jimmie Durham Post Modern Savage" Source; Art in America V.81-February 1993.

Mahoney, Robert- "Jimmie Durham" Source; Flash Art No.168 January/February 1993.

Mac Giolla Léith, Caoimhin "Distant Relations" Source, Flash Art(International Edition) No.190 October 1996.

Purdom, Judy- "Mapping Difference" Source; Third Text No.32 Autumn 1995.

Wallis, Brian "Selling Nations" Source, Art In America, V.83 DEC 1995.