UCLA American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Partial Recall. Edited by Lucy R. Lippard.

Permalink https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7hx2014g

Journal American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 20(1)

ISSN 0161-6463

Author Scherer, Joanna C.

Publication Date

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <u>https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/</u>

eScholarship.org

Powered by the <u>California Digital Library</u> University of California the contributions made by the new data, the consolidation of information into a single source, the identification of holes in the historic record, the focus on ethno-archaeological cooperation, and the construction of models for guiding future research. These all help move Southwest anthropological research another step forward.

Charles C. Case

Partial Recall. Edited by Lucy R. Lippard, with essays on photographs of Native North Americans. New York: The New Press, 1992. 199 pages. \$19.95 paper.

A compilation of articles by Native American scholars, educators, artists, writers, and photographers, this is a unique book, a must for all those who are interested in photographs of or by Indians. The subject matter tackles the vagaries of interpretation of both historical and contemporary Native American photographs.

The book begins with a preface by Leslie Marmon Silko, who distinguishes among the many types of photographers. She writes, "There is a difference between Joseph Mora's [an artist/photog-rapher who was in Hopi and Navajo country between 1901 and 1906 and whose collection of negatives, notably of dance sequences, is owned by Northern Arizona University, Cline Library, Flagstaff] intricate depictions and photographs by *voyeurs/vampires* like [Edward S.] Curtis, [Heinrich R.] Voth and [Adam C.] Vroman" (emphasis mine). Perhaps this is a bit heavy-handed; there were many different motivations for photographing Native Americans, and while some were clearly exploitative, most were documentary and aesthetic in nature.

The introduction by editor Lucy R. Lippard states the importance of this book as a collaborative effort with Native Americans. She believes that looking at photographs is best considered a process of imagination (p. 18) and that if context is all-important for that imagination, it is out of reach in many cases (p. 20). I do not agree with this; I believe that looking at photos is more a process of interpreting the evidence. Much information can be found by in-depth research on these historical photographs. Details concerning the photographers, subjects, and viewers' responses can be regained, but the process takes considerable sleuthing. Lippard also makes the point that photography by Native Americans has only recently become an accepted art form, although many have used the camera privately in the past. She discusses the "monumental figure of Edward Curtis, imperfect hero of the genre and victim of the demythologizing trends of the 1980s." She ends her introduction with a look at one postcard of a Stoney Indian family from Banff, Canada, taken by a Mary Sharples Schaffer Warren in 1907. Lippard presents a subjective description of the image, then deconstructs it by discussing what is known about the photographer, women photographers in general and what she considers to be their special ability to escape from the exocitism of portraying "others," and what she has gathered from published sources on the Stoney.

In addition to her introduction, Lippard selected sixty-six photos, which appear in the second half of the book with what the author characterizes as "sparse" or "quaint" captions. Her research was essentially pictorial, a search for "incongruous, atypical images of cross-cultural interaction and Native life in transition" (p. 15). Her intention in this section is to avoid historical photographs of Indians that pander to the stereotypical and do not reflect Indians as individuals. She also points out that "the photographers whose names we know are virtually all white men, although apparently many women also ran photo businesses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (p. 18). (See Scherer, Benedicte Wrensted: An Idaho Photographer in Focus, Idaho State University Press, 1993, about one such woman photographer of Northern Shoshone and Bannock Indians.) Later Lippard notes that those photographs that she was able to locate taken by women differ in character and show a greater empathy toward the Indian subject (p. 38).

Following the introduction and before the photograph section, the book contains twelve essays by Native Americans. These include studies of an image by Frank Matsura of Southern Okanogan young women, written by Rayna Green; a photograph of Geronimo in a 1904 car, possibly by Walter Ferguson, commented on by Jimmie Durham; a barebreasted Ishi, photographed about 1913 by Joseph Dixon on the Wanamaker Expedition, written by Gerald Vizenor; three collections of snapshots from family albums commented on by Jaune Quick-To-See Smith, Joy Harjo, and Suzanne Benally; Joseph Mora's 1904 photos showing Hopi textiles on dancers, commented on by Ramona Sakiestewa, who used the images as an aid to her weaving; a football team photo by an unknown photographer, 1891 (as an example of boarding school experience), deconstructed by Gerald McMaster; lantern slides, possibly by Robert Chaat, produced by missionaries for fund-raising purposes, commented on by Paul Chaat Smith; a 1992 photomontage by Jolene Rickard, which incorporates a photo of some of her female relatives from the 1940s and a closeup of beadwork by her great-grandmother; a 1990 photocollage by Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie commented on by Gail Tremblay, which consists of "images that speak both aesthetically and politically to a postcolonial reality"; and David Seals's essay on a 1989 photograph by Sarah Penman from Wounded Knee.

One could not wish for a richer, more varied look at photography both by and about Native Americans. Rarely do you find a book that makes the subject so alive and relevant. I do not agree with everything that is said, but I enjoyed immensely this compilation of ideas and images.

Joanna C. Scherer Smithsonian Institution

The Spiritual Quest: Transcendence in Myth, Religion, and Science. By Robert M. Torrance. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. 367 pages. \$35.00 cloth.

Robert M. Torrance's The Spiritual Quest is at once a grand, interdisciplinary exercise in a human-centered theory of reality (and at this level operates innovatively, provocatively, abductively) and a less successful overview of the form the quest takes in several human cultures. Torrance essays to overcome the objectivist/subjectivist cast of so-called modern thought and, in so doing, reveals the limitations of positivist, functional, structural, and deconstructionist modes of physics, biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. Arguing the need to mediate between the binary poles of the objectivist/subjectivist paradigm, Torrance aligns himself with semiotic philosophy (Charles Sanders Peirce, among others) and ritual anthropology (Victor Turner, among others). Torrance thus locates human persons as the inevitable arbitrators between an apparently fixed reality, seemingly objective cultural representations of that reality, and the human need to make sense for themselves in particular, local, and contingent settings. While others have thought productively about these issues, Torrance gives them new ana-