UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Culture in the Marketplace: Gender, Art, and Value in the American Southwest. By Molly H. Mullin.

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8hv118tc

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 25(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Martinez, Matthew J.

Publication Date

2001-06-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

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

Territory. The author explains that from the perspective of the tribes native to the territory this removal and resettlement was invasion. The richness of each tribe's cultural perspective emerges from this historical narrative. Such a book could only have been written by someone with a balanced perspective, a deep appreciation of tribal cultures, and an evenhanded appreciation of the core values of each tribe.

LaVere has a special talent for organizing and explaining a seemingly endless number of events unfolding over an extended period of time. Furthermore, he identifies incidents that are not just large battlefield experiences, but are the events of daily tribal life. Pulitzer Prize—winner Barbara Tuchman noted that the historian's challenge is to locate a hundred examples and select the one or two that most perfectly illustrate a thesis. If ever a book does just that, it is *Contrary Neighbors*. LaVere weaves together an unbelievably complex narrative. He finds just the right incident—at just the right moment—to let us understand the unique history of Indian Territory and her neighboring Native peoples. *Contrary Neighbors* is an artful work built upon a penetrating analysis of how differing cultural and historical experiences impact the response to change among people forced together in the same geographic space.

Contrary Neighbors is an important book that will find a place alongside such classic studies as Grant Foreman's Indian Removal (1932) and Angie Debo's And Still the Waters Run (1940). It provides foundation reading for all who want to know how and why tribal life unfolded as it did in Indian Territory. The Foreman and Debo books remain crucial sources more than half a century after their publication and Contrary Neighbors will, no doubt, have as long and as significant an impact. Moreover, this nineteenth-century history has contemporary significance as it helps explain differences and divisions of tribes in the twenty-first century. As David LaVere concludes: "Though the Plains Indians and the Southeastern Indians might now have much more in common, the gulf between them can still be seen" (p. 29).

Rennard Strickland University of Oregon

Culture in the Marketplace: Gender, Art, and Value in the American Southwest. By Molly H. Mullin. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001. 232 pages. \$54.95 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

Santa Fe, New Mexico, is marketed as the "City Different" where visitors are enticed by colorful landscapes, adobe dwellings, and hundreds of galleries specializing in Indian art. The growing interest in Indian arts and cultures provides the backdrop for *Culture in the Marketplace* to understand some of the dynamics that shaped Indian markets and cultures in the Southwest. In doing so, Molly H. Mullin examines a group of elite East Coast women, referred to as the Bryn Mawrters, who traveled to the Southwest at the turn of the twentieth century in search of alternative notions of culture and gender roles.

Mullin does a thorough job tracing the widespread influence these women had on Native American art markets by drawing upon the construction of value and concepts of American culture.

Culture in the Marketplace explores the patronage of American Indian art in New Mexico through the central themes of "culturalization of difference" and the social construction of value. The first part of the book focuses extensively on the Bryn Mawrters, a network of highly educated, middle- and upperclass white women named for their alma mater, Bryn Mawr College. This elite network included a number of women much less well-known outside Santa Fe: journalist Elizabeth Sheply Sergeant, suffragist Margretta Stewart Dietrich, and two patrons of art and anthropology, Elizabeth and Martha White. According to Mullin, these women saw themselves as champions of a more inclusive American culture that valued the artistic contributions of women and Natives peoples. To members of this network, notions of culture, associated with the field of anthropology, served as valuable tools in a number of struggles to gain public influence and authority for themselves. Furthermore, the Bryn Mawrters sought to define and construct authoritative standards of value in a society increasingly centered on the consumption of commodities.

As examples in her research, Mullin considers existing institutions such as Santa Fe's annual Indian Market, designed to promote Indian art, and some historical antecedents including the 1931 Exposition of American Indian Tribal Arts. The 1931 exposition concentrated on promoting Indian art as a form of cultural preservation and a means of improving economic conditions. Two of the organizers of such events, Margretta Dietrich and Elizabeth White, aimed to place Indian handicrafts in the category of fine art, encouraged Indians to make pieces in accord with elite tastes, and educated potential buyers about Indian art. Indian artists were encouraged to internalize the messages of constructing their work based on elite aesthetics. In one extreme case, Kenneth Chapman, a judge at a Cochiti Pueblo fair in 1935, "reported sadly to the committee that the quality of art was so 'disgracefully poor' that reprimands were given instead of prizes, but more often the artists were at least deemed worthy of encouragement" (p. 114).

For Mullin, the meaning of cultures provided new ways for these privileged women to gain public influence and authority. The Bryn Mawrters moved into new spaces of influence by exerting their skills pertaining to commodity consumptions and the exercise of taste. Mullin illustrates the pageantry of culture through staged public dramas and ceremonies produced by these women. Early-twentieth-century passion for pageantry fit well with the expansion of consumer capitalism because it conveyed the message that identities could be selected, tried on, and performed to suit the occasion of individual and collective interests.

Mullin includes a brief discussion of Margretta Dietrich "playing Indian" along with a photograph of Dietrich dressed in Navajo women's attire—long skirt, velvet blouse, woven blanket, silver concha belt, and layers of necklaces. "Playing Indian," as developed by Phillip Deloria (1998), is used to characterize the appropriation of Indian identity by white Americans, "a sort of cultural cross-dressing in which a white identity is really more affirmed than

transgressed" (p. 71). According to Mullin, "in many ways they [the Bryn Mawrters] were more interested in having Indians 'play Indian' than in playing such a role themselves" (p. 71). However, the book constantly illustrates how the Bryn Mawrters "played Indian" through dress, pageantry, shopping, and the like. They were also emphatic about Indians playing themselves and developed policies and art markets, and, as envisioned by Willa Cather, collected pottery from Pueblo people and housed them in Santa Fe, "where women of the pueblos can always come to study them" (p. 55).

Mullin's methodology is also worthy of comment and serves as a model for future field researchers. The author draws upon a variety of sources and analyzes previously published works from 1910 through the 1930s such as Mary Austin's novel No. 26 Jayne Street and Stuart Chase's Mexico: A Study of Two Americas. These works, along with memoirs and journalistic accounts, are examined in great detail and discussed in relation to American cultural nationalism and commodity consumption.

Mullin also conducted formal and informal interviews with artists, art collectors, dealers, and museum curators, as well as with others connected to networks of art patrons. Quotations from interviews are included throughout the text, though I often found myself wanting to read more of the narratives rather than short excerpts. This was especially the case with the experiences of Santa Fe artists—Yazzie Johnson, Gail Bird, Ramona Sakiestewa, and Paul Rainbird—who have played a significant role in changing the policies and practices originally implemented by the Bryn Mawrters, such as abolishing the costume contest held at Indian Market. Furthermore, Mullin attended various Indian Market events, fundraising auctions, and worked as a volunteer at markets. Her personal observations and conversations with art patrons are included throughout the text and add to the discussion of value and culture in Indian art markets.

What is not included in *Culture in the Marketplace* is a short analysis or overview of Indian art policies. This is especially important at the federal level where the Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB) shapes much of the Indian art policies. The formation of the IACB occurred in 1935, the same time period in which Mullin examines the emergence of art markets in Santa Fe. Much of the policies crafted by the IACB determine who can legally be an Indian artist. The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 later revised stiff penalties for those who market products as "Indian made," when the products are not in fact made by Indians as defined by the act. Any research about Indian art and markets should include some discussion of Indian art policy analysis since these policies essentially define who is an Indian artist.

Mullin contends that the Bryn Mawrters "did not see their own efforts as imposing 'alien' influence, but rather as encouraging the 'authenticity' which others had undervalued" (p. 122). However, the practice of encouraging authenticity from a white, middle- and upper-class background imposes foreign values upon Indian art. Nonetheless, these women did play an important part in developing a more lucrative market for Indian artists. *Culture in the Marketplace* illustrates the dynamics of elite East Coast women who invented and reinvented their identities as well as their relationship with one another.

This book should be read critically and widely for students interested in value and art markets. By drawing upon the little-known experiences of elite women who moved to the Southwest, Mullin effectively demonstrates the changing taste, value, and evaluation of artistic consumption based upon the processes of market and historical transformation in New Mexico from the early twentieth century to the present day.

Matthew J. Martinez University of Minnesota

Dakota Cross-Bearer: The Life and World of a Native American Bishop. By Mary E. Cochran. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. 252 pages. \$29.95 cloth.

It can be argued that scholars' preoccupation with traditional Indian religions has often resulted in the neglect or slighting of the experience of Indian clergy and Indian Christians in general. To some degree this is due to the role that American Christianity, and Christian missionaries in particular, has played as an instrument of cultural domination and legitimation of empire building. At the same time, Indians who became Christians did not necessarily succumb to the imperial designs of Christian missionaries, but managed to maintain preexisting kinship networks and cultural traditions and values. Therefore, Martin Brokenleg and Raymond Bucko in their introduction to this remarkable biography of Harold Jones contend that the work of Mary Cochran offers us "a fuller understanding of the complex interrelations of Christianity and Native belief as well as Indian and white cultures" (p. xii).

Based on interviews and conversations with Jones that draw upon the rich and elaborate tradition of Dakota storytelling, the life of the bishop makes an important contribution to a growing body of literature dealing with the experience of Indian Christians. Illustrative of that literature are the edited collection of writings by James Treat, *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (1996) and the work of Vine Deloria Jr. on his grandfather, Chief Tipi Sapa (Philip Joseph Deloria), *Singing for a Spirit: A Portrait of the Dakota Sioux* (1999). Furthermore, Brokenleg and Bucko conclude *Dakota Cross-Bearer* with an annotated bibliography and suggestions for further reading on varying dimensions of Indian Christianity.

Cochran traces the life history of Harold Jones from his earliest child-hood until his ordination as an Episcopal bishop. Interweaving Jones's own memories and experiences with a history of Episcopal Indian missions and Dakota Christianity, Cochran provides us with a biography of a compassionate and dedicated Christian that provides a window on a world rarely touched upon by more recent biographical studies of Indian people. It should be noted that while Cochran does her best to convey the thoughts, feelings, and worldviews of Dakota life, her biography for all its strengths at various junctures borders on a form of Christian apologetics, which is understandable in