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Living in a (Schrödinger's) Box: Jimmie Durham's Strategic Use of Ambiguity

Suzanne Newman Fricke

For almost three decades, Jimmie Durham has sustained an impossible paradox: he is arguably the most famous Native American artist in the world who is not Native American. With work featured in both group and solo shows, biennials, fairs, and a major retrospective, he has been the subject of numerous monographs and articles written by some of the most respected, serious scholars in the field.¹ Almost all of these writers introduce the artist with two contradictory facts: (1) that Durham self-identifies as Cherokee; and (2) that his Cherokee heritage had been questioned. Given the large body of scholarship about the artist, there must be a reason why the uncertainty has continued for so long. These facts must confuse the average reader; why mention his self-identification only to note that it might not be true?

While the contradiction might seem haphazard, it is a carefully constructed paradox structurally similar to a Schrödinger's cat. In this thought experiment, a cat is sealed in a box with a vial of poison that may or may not have spilled, and as long as the box remains closed, the animal both lives and is already dead. This essay considers how Durham created this ambiguous identity, becoming a Schrödinger's cat, and how he, along with everyone who profited from his status, used it to further his career. In Durham's case, the artist has created his own sealed box, which has not only proven crucial to advancing his career, but also that of everyone relying on the possibility that he is Native, even in the face of evidence to the contrary—every scholar who had

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written about the artist, every curator who included his work, every museum that hosted a show, and every institution or collector who purchased a Durham piece.

Durham did not create his Schrödinger's box until the early 1990s. Before then, he cultivated a reputation both as a leader in the Native rights movement and a "Cherokee" artist. He studied art at the University of Texas, Austin, and the L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Geneva, Switzerland. After completing his BFA in 1972, he moved to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota to join the American Indian Movement's (AIM) occupation of Wounded Knee. From 1975 to 1979, Durham was a member of AIM's Central Council and served as executive director of the International Treaty Council (IITC), an organization of Indigenous people from the Americas working towards sovereignty and protection of rights and lands. In the 1980s, his sculpture was included in many shows featuring Native American artists, notably *Ni'Go Tlunha Doh Ka (We Are Always Turning Around on Purpose)*, the Whitney's *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity from the 1980s*, and *Land Spirit Power*. He also wrote articles and poetry addressing issues Natives face in contemporary life, including his 1983 book of poetry *Columbus Day*.

By the early 1990s, his status as the preeminent contemporary Native American artist was confirmed when several prominent art magazines published articles on his work. Although these articles offer the usual dual admission—that he identifies as Cherokee and that his heritage has been questioned—the authors nonetheless offer praise for Durham's work as both authentically "Native American" and progressive in the contemporary art world. The 1992 edition of *Art Journal*, dedicated to contemporary Native American art, features two articles about Durham, Jean Fisher's "In Search of the 'Inauthentic': Disturbing Signs in Contemporary Native American Art," and Richard Shiff's "The Necessity of Jimmie Durham's Jokes." Shiff describes the "persistent quiet humor in Durham's art—this is perhaps its true Indianness—a Native American quality that can live undisturbed within Euro-American culture," and *Art in America* published art critic Lucy Lippard's "Jimmie Durham—Postmodernist 'Savage'" in 1993, in which Lippard praises Durham's work as so avant-garde that "neither the Native nor the non-Native world is ready" to appreciate it and discusses how his work "peels away the decorative wrappings that disguise the American Indian in the United States' colonial present."²

Even as his reputation as a leading artist grew, so did the questions noting that Durham lacked proof of his heritage, tribal affiliation, and enrollment. Compelled to make a statement, Durham carefully crafted a public announcement in *Art in America* that was designed to be factually accurate while also introducing doubt and room for interpretation. Despite the twenty years he invested in constructing his Native identity, he announces, "I am not Cherokee. I am not an American Indian." He continues by referencing the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 (IACA), which was intended to prevent the sale of mass-produced, foreign-made goods as Native American and forbids anyone to claim Native heritage without proof of tribal enrollment: "This is in concurrence with recent US legislation, because I am not enrolled on any reservation or in any American Indian community."³ Embracing both the literal meaning of his statement and its opposite, Durham's non-denial denial creates a paradox—his own

Schrödinger's box containing two opposing truths—and launched a new career as an artist simultaneously Native and non-Native.

For some scholars, Durham was stating the facts: that he had made false claims to embrace a new identity, an impostor who rose to artistic fame by lying about his heritage until his lies were exposed. This perspective fits the facts in evidence. He was not, and is not, enrolled. He has provided no evidence that he could enroll. No one has stepped forward to verify Durham's accounts of his childhood living on a reservation with parents who spoke Cherokee. Most of the scholarship and exhibition history dating from 1992, however, did not accept the statement at face value and mentions both that he had called himself Native but was not enrolled. This problematic approach continues to the present, offering an ambiguous two-pronged identification. Once Durham had admitted that he is not Cherokee, why was his self-identification still mentioned? Durham's continued adherence to a Native identity serves a larger purpose.

For some scholars, this Schrödinger's box allows Durham to continue to identify as Cherokee while admitting that he is not. Many arguments were brought forth to introduce doubt about his denial, some reasonable and some far-fetched. Some writers view the artist's refusal to pursue enrollment as a political protest, especially in regards to Native policies like the use of blood quantum to determine enrollment.⁴ Some point to other arguably flawed processes for determining tribal enrollment, such as reliance on older documents like the Dawes Roll.⁵ Some viewed Durham as an important artist who was forced to renounce his Native heritage due to the colonizing power of the US government. For example, author and AIM activist Russell Means (Oglala Lakota) argued that Durham was from a Cherokee band that the US government had refused to recognize.⁶

Some writers consider Durham's lack of tribal enrollment as a conscious choice, assuming that the artist could have earned tribal membership but did not as a sign of protest. Lippard describes Durham's refusal to enroll as part of his individualism, noting "His forced rejection of his own identity may be another in-your-face act of non-conformity."⁷ As art critic Aruna D'Souza reported, Hammer Museum materials argue that "his 'refusal to register' with any of the recognized Cherokee tribes was his protest of both the U.S. government (which he said had no right to name him or his people), and of the presumably reactionary stance of the Cherokee 'establishment,' who were simply picking up where the state left off by insisting on arbitrating its membership."⁸ Other writers not only blame the Cherokee Nation for refusing to recognize Durham as one of their own, but also the larger Native American community in general for allowing personal jealousy about his success to deny enrollment. For example, curator Anne Ellegood accused the Cherokee Nation of being "colonized" for its refusal to accept Durham.⁹ Other scholars have suggested that the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, which was spearheaded by the artist David Bradley (White Earth Ojibwe) and Colorado Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne), was based on racist ideas such as blood quantum and represents internalized colonizing impulses.¹⁰

Some writers have argued that the artist's status is irrelevant because his art speaks for itself. Durham himself makes this argument, stating, "I am Cherokee, but

my work is simply contemporary art (and) not 'Indian art' in any sense . . . I do not want a Cherokee license to make money selling 'Indian art' or any other art."¹¹ Richard Schiff argues that "the content of Durham's art is at least as much white as Indian, if not more. No wonder he thinks certification is beside the point—'white' art is not what the market desires from Indians."¹² Art historian and curator Julie Sasse argues that Durham's status has "no direct bearing on the strength and quality of this art."¹³ Scandinavian art scholar and curator Anders Kreuger stated that Durham "is not an American artist, not an Indian artist, not a Cherokee artist. Such categorising is simply not helpful in his case. He is an artist who utilizes the material and spiritual world around him as inspiration, whose work cannot be systematised or summarized."¹⁴

For some writers, the controversy around his identity adds to the excitement about Durham's work. When Durham's 2017 retrospective opened to the Whitney Art Museum in New York City, art critic for the *New York Times* Holland Cotter wrote, "Accusations that he misrepresents himself have been voiced in the past, but were now amplified by social media. This gave a sense that the show of some 120 works was ethically tainted and would, at best, limp into New York. Now that it's here, what do we get? A review of the recent dissension on the museum's website, and the exhilarating sight in the galleries of his singular, cantankerous, container-resistant career."¹⁵

Some scholars have argued that the controversy has not only added to the allure of Durham's work, but also helps to raise the reputation of artists who are Native American. When the 2017 retrospective was shown at the Remai Modern, the museum issued a statement arguing that the show revived the controversy, which was helpful to the Indigenous art world. The controversy was even presented as positive for Native life by highlighting the intricacy around citizenship. Of the show opening at the Whitney in New York *ArtDaily* explained, "This exhibition . . . has revived debates, dating back to the early 1990s, over the artist's claims of Cherokee ancestry. . . . Recent discussions of this point have prompted a wider audience to confront important questions regarding tribal sovereignty, and what it means—or does not mean—for an artist to self-identify as being Native American. This exhibition does not attempt to resolve these questions. Rather, it contends that Durham's work—with its singular and vital critique of Western systems of knowledge and power—offers a crucial perspective on the history of American art and life."¹⁶

The uncertainty at the center of the controversy—Durham's own Schrödinger's box—has ultimately served to protect the artist and his livelihood, as well as the work of museums and scholars who have promoted him. In most cases, however, when an artist's claim of a Native heritage was found to be false, their career would suffer and their art lose value.¹⁷ Initially, several Durham exhibitions closed early or were canceled, as with the Center for Contemporary Arts in Santa Fe and the American Indian Contemporary Arts in San Francisco, but then, only a few years later, Durham became a success in the international art world. Rather than losing his audience, this controversy gave his work "a vital edge" that added to his appeal outside the United States, according to scholar Rob Appleford.¹⁸ Durham's solo shows include *Original Re-Runs (aka, A Certain Lack of Coherence)* in 1993 and 1994 and at Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo, Rome, in 2016. His work has been included in

important group shows, including the Whitney Biennial in 1993, *Documenta IX* in 1992, *Documenta XIII* in 2012, the Venice Biennales in 2001, 2003, and 2005, and the Sydney Biennial in 2004.

His success outside the United States should not come as a surprise. The complex United States laws around enrollment are not always known to scholars and curators inside the country, and abroad, even less so. In addition, Europe has been strongly fascinated with North American Indigenous cultures since contact. For example, watercolors painted by John White, a sixteenth-century artist from the failed Roanoke colony, were translated into engravings and sold in an edition entitled *America*. Pocahontas, the first “Indian Princess,” traveled to England, where she attended many social gatherings and met King James. In 1895, art historian and archaeologist Aby Warburg traveled to the American Southwest on his honeymoon, visiting Ancestral Pueblo sites and several pueblos. Warburg was especially interested in the dances, resulting in the publication of his lectures. That this global fascination continues is evidenced by the quantity of international shows featuring Native American arts and cultures, including “Indianische Moderne Kunst Aus Nordamerika” at the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin in 2012, and “All Our Relations,” the 18th Sydney Biennale co-curated by Gerald McMaster (Plains Cree/Siksika). If anything, Durham’s Native/non-Native status added to his allure outside the United States.

As suggested by the title of Lucy Lippard’s essay, Durham can be described as a “postmodernist savage.”¹⁹ Durham plays with the idea of identity, demonstrating that the self is constructed rather than fixed, for instance. He ties postmodern ideas of identity to the Trickster from Native American narratives, the figure who behaves inappropriately and rejects cultural norms.²⁰ As sociologist Laura Turney explained Durham’s choice to take a didactic role, “Native peoples need the trickster/ironist to destabilize disempowering and politically damaging images/notions of the ‘Indian.’”²¹ The artist’s use of interwoven and contradictory narratives also reflects a postmodern perspective on the world. His art can be seen in the varied lights of Michel Foucault’s theory of the body and the power of institutional knowledge, Jacques Derrida’s idea of inclusion and exclusion, Roland Barthes’ idea of the sign, Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of hybridity, Jean-François Lyotard’s emphasis on the *petit récit* (small narratives) over the *grand récit*, and Gayatri Spivak’s subaltern. Arguing against the idea of a single true self, Durham states, “I don’t think I own a real self. When I’m ‘on my own’ in the woods or here on my canyon terrace [in Mexico], I’m just being with all the stuff that’s there. Without stimulus from outside I’d be perfectly content in those situations for an indefinite time.”²²

Durham questions the very notion of Native American culture, observing, “We do not feel that we are real Indians. But each of us carries this ‘dark secret’ in his heart, and we never speak about it . . . For the most part, we just feel guilty, and try to measure up to the whiteman definition of ourselves.”²³ Jean Fisher furthered this argument, suggesting that there is no such thing as authentic Native American art, since “‘authenticity’ is a category of our Euro-American invention—a function of the gaze, which displaces to the margin the otherness it fails to see at the center of our own being.”²⁴ Durham’s work deliberately underscores the confusion. He wrote, “I

want to jumble up expectations. People think, 'I'm going to see Jimmie Durham's work. He does socially responsible, political, Indian art.' And I want to say, 'Ha ha, that's not what I do. You made a mistake.'"²⁵

Durham often cites the influence of the Dadaist artist Marcel Duchamp, seen in Durham's alter ego Rosa Lévy, an homage to Duchamp's Rose Sélavy. The influence of Duchamp and the Dadaist impulse to adopt new identities allowed, even encouraged, Durham to consider adopting new roles. Duchamp played with identity, observing, "I don't believe in the word 'being'.... The idea is a human invention . . . an essential[ist] concept, which doesn't exist at all, and which I don't believe in."²⁶ Art history is full of artists who created a persona, sometimes embellishing their life stories, sometimes creating new identities entirely. Joseph Beuys's account of crashing in the Crimean wilderness in the middle of winter during WWII and being rescued by Tartar tribesmen who wrapped his body in fat and felt during his rescue shaped much of his art practice but is now thought to be fabricated.²⁷ Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan had his longtime stand-in, the curator Massimiliano Gioni, play him in the 2016 film documentary *Maurizio Cattelan: Be Right Back*.

Perhaps the rise in his work's popularity in the international art world made its return to the United States inevitable. In 2017, the UCLA Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, California, organized the first major retrospective of Durham's work, *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World*. Curated by Anne Ellegood, the show traveled to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Whitney Museum in New York City, and the Remai Modern in Saskatoon, Canada. The show underscores Durham's Indigenous heritage. The show included *Karankawa* from 1982, *Tlunh Datsi* from 1984, *Pocahontas' Underwear* from 1985, *Self-Portrait* from 1986, and other works that are contingent on Durham as a Native artist. To accompany the show, the Hammer hosted several events, including the reading of Durham's poetry and fiction by noted Native American writers, poet and fiction writer Simon J. Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), the poet Allison Adelle Hedge Coke (Huron, Métis, French Canadian, Portuguese, English, Irish, Scot, and mixed Southeastern Native heritage), and poet Orlando White (Diné), reading from Durham's poetry, fiction and essays along with their own writings.

While the catalog acknowledges the disputes over his heritage, the show demonstrates the museum's view that he is Native. Ellegood has been vocal in her support for Durham's Cherokee heritage, which she argues as a simple matter: "either you believe him or you don't. And I do."²⁸ She argued that she was not "comfortable discussing Jimmie as a white guy" because it would invalidate the writings of so many noted scholars. A statement issued by the Walker Art Museum argues, "While Durham self-identifies as Cherokee, he is not recognized by any of the three Cherokee Nations, which as sovereign nations define the terms of citizenship. We recognize that there are Cherokee artists and scholars who reject Durham's claims of Cherokee ancestry."²⁹ In the press release for the show issued by the Remai Modern museum in Saskatoon, Canada, "Durham's retrospective exhibition has reactivated longstanding debate surrounding his self-identification as Cherokee and his refusal to be categorized

as a Cherokee artist.”³⁰ By labeling the dialogue as a “debate” treats any disagreement with his Native status not as a valid viewpoint, but as an unlikely aberration.

Perhaps Ellegood and the Walker Art Museum stress Durham’s Cherokee identity because it is almost impossible to see his work outside this perspective. He favors materials historically used by Native Americans, such as wood, feathers, beads, bones both animal and human, rocks, shells, turquoise, and fur, as well as other found objects, all of which seem designed to appeal to a pan-Indian sensibility. He often emulates many Native designs, including his version of a Northwest Coast Crest pole in *Choose Any Three* from 1989. His art includes clear references to his Cherokee heritage, including his 1986 *Self-Portrait*, which includes the words “Indian penises are unusually large and colorful,” a claim he illustrates with an unusually large and colorful penis. The carved face references Cherokee Booger Dance masks, a ritualized clowning to mock outsiders.³¹ *Pocahontas’ Underwear* from 1985, bright red women’s underpants with beads and feathers, references feathered Pomo basketry and Aztec feathered shields. The title *Tlunh Datsi* is from the Cherokee syllabary, which translates as “panther.”

Ellegood’s insistence on Durham’s Cherokee heritage is crucial because if the artist is not Native, his work in the retrospective she curated becomes not simply meaningless, but even insulting. Works such as *Self-Portrait*, with its “large and colorful” penis and the use of Booger Masks, becomes cultural appropriation. *Pocahontas’ Underwear* seems particularly offensive given the long-term epidemic of missing and murdered Native women. Reviewing the show when it arrived at the Whitney in 2017, art critic Ariella Budick observed, “Unfortunately, his work can’t really withstand the pressure from all these symbolic forces. His mud masks, statuettes and handmade fake tools are too slight to cut through the complexities of race and nationhood that he invokes. His humour tips towards wan rather than biting.”³²

Despite the criticism brought by the 2017 retrospective, his career shows no sign of slowing even after genealogist Kathy Griffin White (Cherokee Nation) discovered the artist’s birth certificate in 2017, which verified his lack of Native ancestry. He continues to exhibit and to win numerous awards, including the Golden Lion for lifetime achievement at the Venice Biennale in 2019. The longer the uncertainty has been allowed to prolong itself, and as the body of scholarship has grown, continual repetition of the same ideas lent them credence. Referring to Durham over and over as a Cherokee artist, even in a qualified statement, cemented the perception that it was true. The Venice Biennale did not bother to note that his status was unverified in their 2019 press release, instead stating that Durham is “a member of the American Indian Movement” who “identifies as a Cherokee.”³³ Scholars continue to find loopholes to explain why Durham cannot prove his tribal identification, or seemingly are content to leave the issue unresolved. Navajo contemporary Native arts scholar Shanna Heap of Birds stated that she would not determine whether someone was Native, “because that’s their experience. It’s not my business. I know who I am.”³⁴

As intended, all of these arguments generate enough confusion to maintain a sliver of doubt about Durham’s status. He said he is not Native but he also blames the government. He is not enrolled—but the process of enrollment is flawed. He could gain recognition—but that would require the artist to capitulate to the colonizing

power of the United States and the Cherokee Nation. Like the courtroom strategy of a defense lawyer, the goal is to sow doubt, enough to make his Native identity seem a plausible option; it is not necessary to prove his case to win. In this way, he is saving everyone who has invested in Durham's art, including curators who have included his work in their shows, museums and collectors who purchased his work, and scholars who have applied their time and expertise writing about him.

If recent history has shown anything, when an assertion is repeated as fact often enough, some people will believe it is true. This certitude stands in contrast to the uncertainty, ambiguity, and contradictions in Durham's life and art, which have engendered several credible stories. Self-invention, an important part of both the Dada movement and postmodern philosophy, has encouraged and given credence to all of these *petit récits* or small narratives, despite the factual evidence that Durham is not Native. As an activist and artist, a leader in the American Indian Movement, and founder of the International Indian Treaty Council, did the hegemony of the colonial federal government force him to renounce his heritage? Or, was he a fraud who pretended to be Native for his own reasons? Did he perhaps assume an Indigenous identity to fit in with his art school friends, then lost himself in his new role? His self-created Schrödinger's box holds him in a suspended state in which he can be anything. If, as Marcel Duchamp once said, "The idea of the great star . . . is based on a made-up history," then Durham is, indeed, one such star.³⁵

NOTES

1. *First American Art Magazine* compiled a list of Cherokee artists covered in scholarly literature according to JSTOR data. See "Facts and Resources: Jimmie Durham," *First American Art Magazine*, June 8, 2017, <http://firstamericanartmagazine.com/facts-resources-jimmie-durham>. The list has 81 mentions of Durham, with Kay WalkingStick the next artist who is mentioned most (18 instances), followed by Joan Hill (17).

2. Jean Fisher, "In Search of the 'Inauthentic': Disturbing Signs in Contemporary Native American Art," *Art Journal* 51, no. 3 (1992), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1992.10791583>; Richard Schiff, "The Necessity of Jimmie Durham's Jokes," *Art Journal* 51, no. 3 (Fall 1992), 79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1992.10791587>; Lucy Lippard, "Jimmie Durham: Postmodernist 'Savage,'" *Art in America* 84, no. 2 (February 1993), 64, <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/from-the-archives-jimmie-durham-postmodernist-savage-63245/>.

3. Jimmie Durham, "Letters," *Art in America* 81, no. 7 (July 1993): 23, reprinted August 15, 2017, <https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazines/letters-identities-clarified/>. The passage of the IACA is discussed at length in Julie Sasse, "A Piece of the Indian Pie: Contemporary Native American Art and the Authenticity Controversy," MA thesis, Arizona State University, 1994, and in Robert Fay Scharader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board: An Aspect of the New Deal Indian Policy* (Minnetonka: Olympic Marketing Corporation, 1983).

4. Sociologist Laura Turney argued that he could have enrolled "but there are political, social and cultural implications and compromises inherent in such an application that would render it

nonsensical in Durham's political, artistic and literary context." See Laura Turney, "Ceci n'est pas Jimmie Durham," *Critique of Anthropology* 19, no. 4 (1999), 423–42, 427, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0308275X9901900409>.

5. The Dawes Roll is a list of the names of Native Americans living on lands allotted to the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, and Seminole written from 1893 to 1907 (with an addition in 1914). It missed many Cherokee, both those who chose not to sign up for the government's count, those who were not living on lands on the Cherokee Nation, and others who were not considered eligible.

6. Russell Means, *Where Whitemen Fear to Tread* (New York: St. Martins-Griffins, 1995), 365.

7. Jimmie Durham, Lucy Lippard, and Nancy Marie Mitchell (Mithlo), "Letters: Identities Clarified?" *Art in America* (August 15, 2017 [rpt. 1993]), <https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazines/letters-identities-clarified/>.

8. Aruna D'Souza, "Mourning Jimmie Durham," *Momus*, July 20, 2017, <https://momus.ca/mourning-jimmie-durham/>.

9. *Service Media: Is It 'Public Art'? Or Is It Art in a Public Space*, ed. Stuart Keeler (Chicago: Green Lantern Press, 2013), 70.

10. Greta Murphy, "Across the Great Divide: Jimmie Durham's Subversive (Self) Portraits," PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2003, 135.

11. Quoted in Turney, "Ceci n'est pas Jimmie Durham," 428, and in Shiff, "The Necessity of Jimmie Durham's Jokes," 75.

12. Shiff, "The Necessity of Jimmie Durham's Jokes," 75.

13. Sasse, "A Piece of the Indian Pie," 48.

14. Anders Krueger, "Stone as Stone: An Essay about Jimmie Durham," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry* 30 (2012): 17, <https://doi.org/10.1086/667242>.

15. Holland Cotter, "Coming Face to Face with Jimmie Durham," *The New York Times* (November 2, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/02/arts/design/jimmie-durham-review-whitney-museum-choke.html>.

16. "The Whitney Opens First U.S. Retrospective of Jimmie Durham," *ArtDaily*, November 27, 2018, <https://artdaily.cc/news/100123/The-Whitney-opens-first-U-S--retrospective-of-Jimmie-Durham#.X1Av4HIKq2w>.

17. There are several examples of this. Sarah Ann Stolte's article in this *AICRJ* special issue discusses the case of Yeffe Kimball, née Effie Goodman, a successful mid-twentieth-century abstract painter who has been largely forgotten. Kimball's life and art is also discussed at length in Bill Anthes, "Becoming Indian: The Self-Invention of Yeffe Kimball," in *Native Moderns: American Indian Painting, 1940–1960* (Durham: Duke University Press), 117–41, and in Sasse, "A Piece of the Indian Pie: Contemporary Native American Art and the Authenticity Controversy," 38–40. Ward Churchill, professor of ethnic studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder was forced to leave his job when his assertions of Muscogee, Creek, and Cherokee ancestry were denied by the tribes. The artist Randy Lee White, who called himself White Horse from the Sioux tribe in South Dakota, painted images inspired by ledger art. His works were featured in several prominent exhibitions until his Indigenous status was challenged. He left Santa Fe, NM, for Los Angeles, CA, and turned to landscapes.

18. Rob Appleford, "Jimmie Durham and the Carpentry of Ambivalence," *Social Text* 28, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 92.

19. Lippard, "Jimmie Durham: Postmodernist 'Savage.'"

20. The role of the trickster in art was explored in Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999).

21. Turney, "Ceci n'est pas Jimmie Durham," 426.

22. Lippard, "Jimmie Durham: Postmodern 'Savage.'"

23. Jimmie Durham, *Columbus Day* (Minneapolis: West End Press, 1983), 84; qtd. in Fisher, "In Search," 46.
24. Fisher, "In Search," 50.
25. Jimmie Durham. *A Certain Lack of Coherence: Writings on Art and Cultural Politics* (Kala Press, 1993), 119.
26. Blake Gopnik, "'Inventing Marcel Duchamp' at the National Portrait Gallery," *Washington Post*, April 7, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/06/AR2009040603866.html?noredirect=on>.
27. For more information about Beuys's version of his story, see Peter Nisbet, "Crash Course—Remarks on a Beuys Story," in *Joseph Beuys, Mapping the Legacy*, ed. Gene Ray (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2001).
28. National Coalition Against Censorship, "Who Can Speak for Whom? Artistic Freedom and the Challenges of Dealing with the Pain of Historical Trauma," College Art Association Conference, 2018, Los Angeles, California.
29. Posted on <https://walkerart.org/calendar/2017/jimmie-durham-center-world>.
30. "Remai Modern Supports Artist Jimmie Durham," 2017 press release, <https://remainmodern.org/press/media-releases/remai-modern-supports-artist-jimmie-durham>.
31. Murphy, "Across the Great Divide: Jimmie Durham's Subversive (Self) Portraits," 137–42.
32. Ariella Budick, "Jimmie Durham at the Whitney: Cherokee Artist or White Imposter?" *Financial Times* (November 6, 2017), <https://www.ft.com/content/a4825246-c2df-11e7-b30e-a7c1c7c13aab>.
33. Agence France-Presse, "Jimmie Durham to Receive the Golden Lion at the 2019 Venice Biennale," *The Jakarta Post*, April 9, 2019, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2019/04/08/jimmie-durham-to-receive-the-golden-lion-at-the-2019-venice-biennale.html>.
34. Quoted in Sheila Regan, "Jimmie Durham Retrospective Reignites Debate over His Claim of Native Ancestry," *Hyperallergic*, June 28, 2017, <https://hyperallergic.com/387970/jimmie-durham-retrospective-reignites-debate-over-his-claim-of-native-ancestry/>.
35. Quoted in Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1971), 104.