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At the Center of the Controversy: Confronting Ethnic Fraud in the Arts

Ashley Holland

Who is Jimmie Durham? It would seem that an artist who has shared so much of himself through his art would be well known and easily described. And, in some ways, pretty much anyone with a general knowledge of Durham would probably be able to tick off a few of the highlights: Native artist, grew up in Arkansas speaking Cherokee, AIM leader, and dropper of rocks onto cars. But identity is complicated and (auto)biography is editable, subjective, and fallible. And, much like art, *who* someone is depends on whom is considering that question. With Durham, it has become clear that the askers themselves are consistent, though their answers vary drastically depending on whether they are non-Native art critics, curators, scholars of Indigenous art (both Native and non-Native), or personal friends.[1] This consistency has allowed a successful artist with a questionable identity to continue to succeed in a mainstream art world that seemingly feels ill equipped to raise important and necessary questions.

This reality of an uncomfortable relationship between Indigenous identity and the art world came to the forefront during the large-scale retrospective exhibition, *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World*.[2] The exhibition marked a point of frustration for many Native peoples who had long known Durham was not Cherokee. Despite efforts in the 1990s to reveal ethnic fraud, once again Durham was taking up space as a Native artist without any known or recognized tribal affiliation. As a Cherokee scholar and museum professional, my efforts to stay disconnected from the controversy soon became impossible. This essay will first offer an overview of the artist's publicly known biography, which has been repeated in various forms for many decades. I also briefly review the major Durham retrospective that, despite statements attempting to move

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his body of work beyond the artist's assertions of indigeneity, in fact relied heavily on those unfounded claims. I conclude with a personal recollection of both the victories and the frustrations of my own experiences in confronting ethnic fraud in Native art. My overall goal is to shine even a small light on the larger issues that face the field of Native art and Native representation in museums as a whole.

The Artist

In 1993, art historian and critic Lucy R. Lippard outlined Jimmie Durham's background and work in an *Art in America* article:

> Born into the Wolf Clan in 1940 in Nevada County, Ark., Durham was raised there and in Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma, as his father traveled looking for work. At 16, [Durham] left home to work at ranching jobs in Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico, and became a member of the Native American Church . . . (The church's water bird imagery still turns up in Durham's art.)[3]

In the late 1960s to early 1970s, Durham lived for a period in Switzerland and studied at the Ecoles des Beaux-Arts de Genève. It was during this time that he began making abstract sculptures and described himself as "a Cherokee trying to be European, which made my work odd."[4] By 1973, Durham returned to the United States and focused on political activism. Lippard reports that:

> He spent most of the '70s with the American Indian Movement (AIM), serving on its executive committee until 1980. In 1974 AIM created the International Treaty Council, with Durham as director. He set up offices in New York and Geneva, and represented the organization at the United Nations, trying to pass resolutions through the Decolonization Committee and Human Rights Commission . . . Finally, disillusioned with communal infighting, Durham left both organizations.[5]

Post-AIM and through the 1980s, Durham was an active participant and influencer in the New York art world. "This new work [ca. 1980s] was a departure from the 'studio art' Durham had made in school. A decade of Indian activism had brought him back to the remnants of his own culture, and the new sculptural objects were born from the memory of a crucial childhood experience."[6] Lippard's article includes a quote from Durham that retells how, as a young man, he went into the woods and received his "real name" from Coyote, the trickster of many Native cultures. From Coyote, Durham also received the gift of seeing "whatever was dead if it were within my field of vision."[7] This ability to see death, and using bones to physically stand in for dead beings, played heavily into Durham's work during the 1980s. Eventually though, Durham became disillusioned with this style of work. Lippard states:

> By 1989, Durham was expressing reluctance to show the bone pieces because they were too "beautiful" and fed viewers' stereotypes about "Indian" art. In its humor and irony, however, his work is in fact very "Indian." . . .Yet even as he makes "Cherokee art," Durham resists making anything recognizably "Indian" in

> the Santa-Fe-Indian-mold. His art is not decorative or lyrical and does not reference history through style. He avoids noble braves and bashful maidens, tipis and warbonnets, like the commercial plague they have become.[8]

She continues with why being an "Indian" can be hard for artists trying to participate in a contemporary, non-Native art world:

> Durham's dilemma, as he tries to represent the unpresentable, is that any artist who has something to say *and* something to see, but he also works under long-invalidated expectations of Indian "authenticity." . . . Durham challenges long-held assumptions about Indians and Indian art. Like many Native modernists, he has long been caught between reluctance to exploit his Indianness and pride in his battered heritage.[9]

In tracing Durham's biography, his eventual exit from the United States in 1987 is a significant event. He left with his partner, artist Maria Thereza Alves, moving first to Cuernavaca, Mexico, and then to Europe, where they have lived since 1994.[10] To this day Durham remains an expatriate, living in Berlin, Germany.

In an earlier review of Durham's work and his involvement in Native art creation and exhibitions during the 1980s, Lippard's seminal text *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America* discusses the importance of irony, humor, subversion, and the Trickster motif in Native art. Lippard gives the following definition for the Trickster:

> Trickster is the model for Indian artists who seem only to be chuckling, if sarcastically, but intend the most drastic subversion. He (or sometimes she) appears in the guise of the conquered savage, the down–and-out drunkard who "can't adjust": as the object of murderous charity, as well as in the guise of the successful professor or businessman who seems to have learned the trick of adjusting; both may resort to a bag of tricks at any moment. Coyote—the best known Trickster avatar—is the Indian who isn't good because he won't stay dead.[11]

To Lippard, Durham is the epitome of a Trickster. He uses everyday, natural, and found objects, often pairing incompatible pieces to create new forms in which "the sum of the parts is an unconsummated union."[12] Lippard reflects on the conflict Durham feels as he participates in the larger art market: he produces work meant to maintain culture and serve as a statement of continuance for Native peoples, but there is also an uncomfortableness. According to her analysis, "Whatever he does, Durham feels he is pursued by the voracious appetites of the dominant culture, which wants not only his land, his art, and his culture, but his soul. As prey and as artist, he has decided to set an erratic course, to double and redouble, engage and separate."[13] Thus, Lippard sees Durham's work existing in an uncomfortable, but inescapable, state between American and Native, Trickster and artist.

The Exhibit

The retrospective exhibition organized by the UCLA Hammer Museum continued many of the ideas proposed by Lippard, viewed through an understanding of Native

art history almost thirty years old. This exhibition, however, claimed to shift the focus away from the early 1990s and onto Durham's contributions to the field of American art at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries instead. *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World* was described on the museum's website as:

> With close to 200 objects dating from 1970 to the present and accompanied by a catalogue comprising several scholarly essays, an interview with the artist, a chronology, and a selection of his own writings, both old and new, the exhibition traces Durham's ongoing use of materials such as bone, stone, and wood while also demonstrating his commitment to shedding light on the complexities of historical narratives, notions of authenticity, and the borders and boundaries that try to contain us. Durham's life and career are remarkable, in part, for his embrace of a "homelessness," one that has led him to live and work in numerous places. While many would feel unmoored and disoriented by this constant relocation, for Durham, it is his natural state, as he immerses himself in the culture, history, and culinary habits of each temporary adopted home, always choosing to consider wherever he happens to be "the center of the world." Durham is arguably one of the most important artists working actively in the international contemporary art scene today, and *At the Center of the World* provides a much-anticipated opportunity for audiences to gain a deeper understanding of, or perhaps encounter for the first time, the richly rewarding work of this complex, absorbing, and peripatetic artist.[14]

Gone are the comparisons to Coyote and even a focus on Durham's "Cherokee-ness" becomes more of a footnote than a thesis, at least in this description. Rather than being viewed as "other," a label Durham seemingly employs and embraces, the description places a sense of American ownership on the work: Durham, the prodigal son, has returned to the United States!

The exhibition was large in both scale and scope. Covering more than forty years of Durham's portfolio, this retrospective was the first solo show of the artist in twenty-two years.[15] Unlike other retrospective exhibitions given for living artists, this honoring of Durham lacked any direct interactions with the artist and took place only by viewing and interpretation of his work. Durham is nonetheless present in the exhibition through proxy, with many works acting as literal and figurative self-portraits. As noted in a *New York Times* review, "But viewers had to make do with the self-portrait, because the artist with bright blue eyes and a wry, self-deprecating sense of humor is nowhere to be seen."[16]

It became clear that the exhibition was a physical extension of the artist. The show was highly personal, including many famous versions of the artist's self-portraits. Durham's mixed-media *Self-portrait*, 1986, purchased by the Whitney Museum of American Art in the 1990s and on loan to this exhibition, was prominently displayed. Like many of Durham's works, *Self-portrait* is complex in both structure and meaning. The sculpture is made of canvas, cedar, acrylic paint, metal, synthetic hair, scrap fur, dyed chicken feathers, human rib bones, sheep bones, seashell, and thread. Covering the flat canvas body, words proclaim, "Hello! I am Jimmie Durham . . . I am actively seeking Employment." In addition, the inscribed body addresses Native stereotypes,

"an addiction to Alcohol, Nicotine, Caffeine," for instance. The sculpture and included text imply both a personal connection to the artist and a response to assumptions placed upon Native peoples. Overall, *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World* was a thorough retrospective of the artist's work. The exhibition established a timeline that follows both Durham's movement through his artistic development and his nomadic ways. There is little question about who Jimmie Durham is as an artist, how he views himself, and what he feels about the world around him.

Many of the works were borrowed from private collections, the majority international. Some works were purchased for the Hammer Museum's permanent collection. It is easy to see that a large portion of Durham's popularity has been experienced outside of the United States. As Stéphane Aquin, chief curator of the Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC noted, "[Durham]'s been acknowledged in Europe for years, but he's been under the radar in the United States for decades. [Jimmie Durham] is a highly significant artist."[17] *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World* pays homage to Durham as an important American and Native artist, and numerous national publications have praised the exhibition for its importance, timeliness, and need. At the same time, however, critics of this world-renowned artist again were asking, though on a quieter scale, previously raised questions of cultural authenticity and intention,. This is one reason why it continues to be important not to take Durham's claims of Native descent simply at face value, but instead to critically investigate his work and reception.

The Controversy

Durham has long self-identified as a Cherokee artist, even if he is not always comfortable with the title "Indian," or what it might entail.[18] Moreover, since almost every author, critic, and curator refers to him as Cherokee, it is impossible not to associate Durham's work with his understanding of Native identity. As Lippard opines, for example, "[He] epitomizes the irony and ferocious humor of [the Trickster] in contemporary art."[19] Despite Durham's being honored as a successful Native artist, controversy abounds concerning that identity. Over the years, many critics have called into question Durham's claim of Cherokee descent—especially Native peoples. Prior to 1990 and the passage of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act ("IACA", or Public Law 101-644), however, those misrepresenting non-Native-made art as Native incurred few consequences, if any, with no recourse for the Native artists financially injured by these fraudulent practices.

After passage of the IACA, while many fraudulent artists were no longer able to sell their "Indian art," those Native artists lacking enrollment in either a state- or federally recognized tribe also cannot market their work as made by a Native person. This distinction also limited the venues where such Native artists could exhibit, as many Native-focused museums followed the law to avoid steep penalties. Durham is one such artist affected by the law. A review of the Hammer exhibition notes:

> The impact of [the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 on Durham] is explained in the wall text in the gallery: "Durham has always refused to register, believing that

to do so would be to acquiesce to colonial systems intended to authenticate and control indigenous people. He also considers the law to be unfair and inherently flawed because it inevitably punishes the many Native Americans who remain unregistered for a whole variety of reasons, from belonging to a tribe not recognized by the U.S. government to being separated from family by adoption." If his identity as a Cherokee, central in his works, has been challenged, his involvement for the American Indian Movement in the 1970s is indubitable.[20]

But the case against recognizing Durham as a "Cherokee artist," evident even today, exceeds the single argument that he lacks official enrollment. A 2015 *Indian Country Today* editorial concerning recent instances of identity misrepresentation, for example, identifies Durham as a potential ethnic fraudster: "Jimmie Durham has made a career of being Cherokee with no known ties to any Cherokee community, although he's claimed to be Wolf Clan and to have been raised with Cherokee as a first language."[21] This editorial moves beyond the legal issues of tribal enrollment to raise other substantive Native issues and concerns.

As a Cherokee woman, my approach to understanding indigeneity in the legal context often feels both unconscious, like breathing, and also completely overwhelming, like drowning. I have always known myself to be Cherokee. My mother's family has always understood themselves as being Cherokee. The Cherokee Nation legally recognizes us as "Indian," as does the United States government: I have an enrollment number; my great-grandmother's name is listed on the Dawes Roll; I possess a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) and a Cherokee Nation ID card. But what does all that mean? When thinking about my identity, I can break it down into different categories: biology, legal recognition, historical documents. My family's understanding of themselves—beyond that of legal status, biology, and the ability to state, "I'm an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation"—is variable and unique even between siblings. That complexity reminds me that Native identity, even in a legal context, is never black and white; ironically, it's also not just brown.

In his book *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*, Scott Richard Lyons states, "The most nagging question in Native intellectual discourse happens to be its most basic: who is an Indian?"[22] In that simple statement and question, Lyons gets to the heart of why talking, writing, and studying about Native identity is so complicated: there is no one answer to what defines Native identity. And even the (never) simple act of defining Native identity will not tell us who is Indian. As he says, "definitions of identity are not people; they are in fact things, things used to describe people, and always the invented fabrication of human beings."[23] Identity is a construct, not based on science or biology or law, but perception. But, for Native peoples, identity is more than just how one views oneself or how others view them; it's also linked to politics and community. As Lyons summarizes, "Indian identity is something people do, not what they are," also noting that "Indian identities are not *personally* constructed; they are *socially* constructed."[24]

Language, participation in ceremony, and communal understanding are more important than legal recognition. Lyons's discussion removes settler-colonial constructs

of Native identity from documentation and blood quantum and, arguing for a Native concept of identity whereby recognition comes through the community and Indigenous acts, returns it to an Indigenous perspective. It is through lenses set by Lyons and others in the field of Native American studies that I choose to view Jimmie Durham and his exhibition. While many art historical essays and articles written about Durham reference his Cherokee descent, the authors often are poorly equipped to examine issues of Indigenous identity critically. Many of the "Durham is Cherokee" arguments center around his involvement with AIM in the 1970s, but this in no way validates his identity as Indigenous. In fact, another famous AIM member, Ward Churchill, was exposed as an ethnic fraud in the early 2000s.

In addition, although many authors, critics, and curators discussing Durham are non-Native, Natives are unwilling to publicly call out or question Durham's identity claims. I suggest several reasons why other Native peoples might choose not to question Durham's identity. One reason for this reluctance may be a fear the positive attention being given to Native art would be voided if Durham is outed as non-Native. He is arguably one of the most well-known contemporary artists in the world, and for a self-identifying Cherokee artist to have a retrospective exhibition of this scale at a non-Native museum is no small feat. Whether Durham's Cherokee descent is true or not, his success may very well open the door for other Native artists to become more visible in, and to, mainstream institutions. Another reason for the reluctance to question Durham is that concepts of Native identity, especially in the legal and biological context, are strongly tied to settler colonialism. Imposing strict concepts of who is and who isn't Native simply makes Native peoples complicit with the colonizers. Durham himself has commented, "I am a full-blooded contemporary artist, of the sub-group (or clan) called sculptors. I am not an American Indian, nor have I ever seen or sworn loyalty to India. I am not a Native 'American,' nor do I feel that 'America' has any right to either name me or un-name me."[25]

In my critique of Durham's identity claims, I am in no way arguing against the validity of his artwork, nor the importance of *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World*. If anything, his labeling as Cherokee and a retrospective exhibition at a mainstream museum may have long-term benefits for other Native artists. Nonetheless, questioning Durham's self-identification as Cherokee is necessary. I honestly cannot say if Durham grew up in a Cherokee-speaking home and is from the Wolf Clan, though I doubt it. But if Durham may never "fess up" one way or the other, I propose that some truth can be found in his art.

In the case of the 2002 short film *La poursuite du bonheur (The Pursuit of Happiness)*, for example, Durham has cast an Albanian artist, Anri Sala, as the character "Joe Hill," described as an "American Indian artist, probably Shoshone or Paiute origin." Hill, over the course of the film, ventures outside his dilapidated trailer to collect roadkill and debris, which he then makes into art and sells to a gallery with a cowboy audience. After selling his "Native" art to a non-Native audience hungry to own a stereotypical work by an Indian, Hill makes a lot of money, eventually burns down his trailer, and flies off to France. At the end of the film, Hill is seen dining at a café in Paris, with none other than Durham himself. His film could easily be seen as

a not-so-thinly-veiled autobiography: Durham too is an "American Indian artist" who creates artwork out of roadkill and found objects, sells to non-Native collectors, and used his money to leave for Europe.

Considering the currents at play in works such as this short film, it is my opinion that Durham's work would be better served if it were to carry the label of "American" art rather than "Native" art. As a Cherokee person, in my view the work is certainly not "Cherokee" art, the label Durham is fond of asserting, though he would hate being labeled as an "American artist," as he has openly expressed his hatred for the United States.[26] However, Durham's view of America is simplistic—the Cherokee are a part of the larger American identity, whether we like it or not. Durham may not fit into the legal requirements set forth by the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, and because he neither participates within the Cherokee community nor has recognition from any tribe or nation, he also does not resemble unenrolled, Indigenous-identified individuals as Native scholars like Lyons have conceived of them. People have used claims of Native ancestry for a long time to benefit themselves. They will continue to do so if no one raises any questions.

From a personal and professional standpoint, I have spent more time talking, thinking, and arguing about Durham than I ever thought possible. When I first heard about the exhibition, I will admit that my initial reaction was mild indifference laced with annoyance. Prior to that event, my interaction with Durham or his work was limited. From 2007 to 2016, I had served as an assistant curator at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis. My museum career focused on contemporary Native artists, something I did not consider Durham to be at all. His work and his influence on Native artists would occasionally come up, but these conversations were always paired with not-so-quiet questioning of Durham's claims of being Cherokee.

As a doctoral student, it was harder to ignore Durham's impact on the field of Native art, as his name would regularly appear in the scholarship I was reading. Without fail, Durham served as an example of a supremely successful Native artist. Even mentions of his questionable Cherokee heritage within the scholarship were usually dismissed, sometimes in the same sentence, by reiterating past activism in the name of Indigenous people. It was oddly refreshing then, when, in a Native American Studies elective course, Durham once again was discussed but rather than framing him as a celebrated Native artist, he was used as an example of ethnic fraud.

As the hype of the inaugural display of the exhibition continued to grow, my previous indifference and frustration quickly changed to anger. Every time Durham was referred to as Native, as Cherokee, my reaction was visceral. The national scale and attention the exhibition and Durham were receiving spurred me to action. My initial formal response was that of a student; I decided to write an end-of-term paper critiquing the Durham exhibit through the lens of a Cherokee woman. This first paper was hard to write for numerous reasons. As mentioned, most art-focused scholarship discussed Durham as a "Native artist" and very little did not. So, doing what any contemporary scholar in the age of technology does, I posted on Facebook. The impact of Facebook on the visuality of this discussion cannot be overemphasized, as

conversations between various people now became public that before had happened behind the scenes. Some of these conversations were very positive; many were not. And with each negative comment standing against Native peoples exercising our right to self-determination, my resolve, and that of many others, not to allow questioning of Durham's Cherokee identity to again be swept under the rug, continued to grow.

In his 2017 article "Elements from the Actual World," Jonathan Griffin reviewed Durham's career retrospective at the Hammer Museum for *Art in America*. While Griffin focused on the relevance and need for such an exhibit by a prolific contemporary artist, he failed to explain accurately the complexities of Native identity and representation that surround Durham, which extended the same continuous failure prevalent throughout the exhibit and catalogue. The article included such remarks as, "One might imagine that Durham's ethnicity would be, today, beyond question. His activist work with the American Indian Movement in the 1970s—when he served as director of the International Indian Treaty Council, fighting for recognition in the United Nations—is widely documented. But the field is evidently still riven with conflict, both internal and external, much of which centers on the question of where authority comes from for native people."[27]

National Museum of the American Indian curator Kathleen Ash-Milby understood that responses from Native people to this *Art in America* article were necessary, especially from Cherokee peoples.After contacting colleagues at the magazine, Ash-Milby reached out to me and America Meredith to write responses to Griffin's review. In some ways, it felt as if finally, our voices were going to be heard, and in a mainstream cultural platform not often afforded Native arts. I would like to applaud *Art in America*'s willingness to publish responses to the Griffin article, but in the same issue, an immediate counter-response from Griffin entirely dismisses our views: "For what it's worth, I cannot believe that Jimmie Durham is a white man who has consistently lied about his family background, as if consumed by a shameful desire for Native American culture."[28] It is hard to view this *Art in America* victory for meaningful "dialogue" when the final word essentially discredits our statements. And, while Griffin was allowed to counter our response to his review, we were not given the same benefit.

Moreover, this was not the only moment when public responses from the contemporary art world made our efforts feel ignored or ridiculed. On July 16, 2017, recent Pulitzer Prize-winning art critic Jerry Saltz chose to post on Native concerns about fraud on Facebook, with remarks that include "Please please leave the art world all you trying to say who can make art about what and what is permissible" and "Please go away. We can't help you anymore." How painful it was to read that, both as a Native person and a student of Native American art history. Here, I emphasize that for many, what has gotten lost on the outskirts of this issue is that the struggle against a dominant society that belittles your culture and its art is a daily reality and constant obstacle. Identity is very personal. And Native art faces unique issues that can be hard to understand by those that do not deal with them on a regular basis. I should note that Saltz did somewhat retract his previous post later in this thread, but his response was slightly sarcastic and did little to right the previous wrong.

But even with the moments of frustration, positive conversations came about because of the Durham exhibition. I had the honor of presenting on two separate panels. Coincidentally, both had "Beyond" in the title but each had separate goals. The first panel, "Beyond Jimmie Durham: Contemporary Native American Art and Identity," took place at the Whitney Museum of American Art on November 16, 2017. I was joined by fellow Native panelists Jeffrey Gibson (Mississippi Band of Choctaw/Cherokee), Betsy Theobold Richards (Cherokee Nation), Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora), and moderator Kathleen Ash-Milby (Navajo Nation). The panel occurred in concert with the Whitney's display of Durham's exhibit. It was my first time actually seeing the Durham exhibit. The panel itself was important, both because of its location and the presence of five Native scholars, curators, and artists on the stage of the Whitney talking about Native art. Unfortunately, a large part of the conversation had to be spent rehashing what had become old news at that point for many of us. But to have it on such a public forum, both at the museum and livestreamed over Facebook, was a victory.

The second panel I participated in took place on March 29, 2018 at the Walker Art Center. Unlike the Whitney panel, this event happened after the closing of the Walker's exhibition of Durham's work. It came on the back of an especially problematic time at the Walker, following the disastrous installation and eventual dismantling of Sam Durant's *Scaffold*, the opening of Durham's exhibit despite public protest from the local Native community, and the eventual resignation of Walker executive director Olga Viso.[29] Moderated by artist and curator Dyani White Hawk (Sicangu Lakota), the panel, "Beyond the Guest Appearance: Continuity, Self-Determination and Commitment to Contemporary Native Arts," included Native panelists Nicholas Galanin (Tlingit/Unangax̂), Candace Hopkins (Carcross/Tagish First Nation), and Steven Loft (Mohawk). I was incredibly proud to participate in this conversation because it was the first time I felt Durham no longer served as the focal point, but rather a jumping off point on how to right wrongs and move forward in museums that historically have not included Native art or voices.

Then and now, the conversations surrounding the Jimmie Durham exhibition speak to a much bigger issue, one I constantly think about and consider in my own scholarship and curation: "What is the relationship between American art and Native art?" This is not a unique question and I am not the only one asking it. And what I have discovered is that there is not a singular answer, at least not one that I have found. Some believe that the solution to issues that exhibitions like Durham's bring to the art world could be answered by a post-identity understanding of American art that absorbs the numerous cultures and communities that reside in the land now known as the United States. Simply adding Native art into the canon of American art is another proposed solution, though hardly popular for many Native people, especially those of us committed to Native American art history. Ultimately, because museums lack Native representation, Native voices in the structure of museums are not as readily present as they should be, and therefore simply adding Native art into American art collections is not a lasting solution.

Overall, my experience with *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World* solidified some realities that guide my own career as a Native curator and scholar. Native art and American art are related fields because we live in a settler-colonial reality. But Native art deserves a nuanced approach that cannot be accomplished by simple inclusion or absorption. And when the complexities of Native art become apparent to the non-Native art world, the response should be one of understanding and a desire to learn. To tell us to stop complaining, or that we exist in a post-identity world, is not just ignorant, but aggressively demeans the continuing struggle faced by Native peoples for sovereignty and self-determination.

So, I was happy once the Jimmie Durham exhibition closed at its final venue in Canada and I will continue to cringe when I see Durham's name mentioned in conversations about Native art—because it will still happen. For every victory, there is still that person or institution invested in continuing that viewpoint, for whatever reason. But from this point on, I hope that all American museums are aware that we are watching them. Promises of increased inclusion have been made. Calls for more Native art shows and Native museum professionals across the board have been made. If there is anything we as Native people know, promises mean little. Only in actual actions can true progress happen and past wrongs be addressed. We want not only to become part of the American art world, but also to be equal and visible.

Notes

1. Many of Durham's biggest supporters in the art world include the late British art critic and writer Jean Fisher, curator Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche), First Nation scholar Richard William Hill, Cherokee artist Kay WalkingStick, and known ethnic fraud Ward Churchill. See also Anne Ellegood, "Jimmie Durham: Post-American," in *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World*, ed. Anne Ellegood, 13–36 (Los Angeles: Hammer Museum with DelMonico Books-Prestel, 2017); Jessica L. Horton, *Art for an Undivided Earth: The American Indian Movement Generation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).
2. *Jimmie Durham: At the End of the World* was organized by the Hammer Museum and curated by Anne Ellegood, senior curator, with MacKenzie Stevens, curatorial assistant. It premiered at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, California (January 29-May 7, 2017). The traveling exhibition tour schedule included: Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota (June 22-October 8, 2017); the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City, New York (November 3, 2017-January 28, 2018); and the Remai Modern in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada (March 23-August 5, 2018).
3. Lucy R. Lippard, "From the Archives: Jimmie Durham-Postmodernist Savage," *Art in America*, February 1993, http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/from-the-archives-jimmie-durham-postmodernist-savage/.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ellegood, *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World*, 8.
11. Lucy R. Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America* (New York City: Pantheon Books, 1990), 205–6.

12. Ibid, 209.

13. Ibid, 211.

14. "Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World." Hammer Museum, https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2017/jimmie-durham-at-the-center-of-the-world.

15. Jori Finkel, "The Artist Jimmie Durham: A Long Time Gone, But Welcomed Back," *The New York Times*, March 10, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/10/arts/design/the-artist-jimmie-durham-a-long-time-gone-but-welcomed-back.html.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. "Self-identified" refers to his public claims of Cherokee descent but no official recognition by or enrollment in a Cherokee tribe that is federally or state-recognized.

19. Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*, 208.

20. "'Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World,' Hammer Museum L.A.," *Inferno Magazine*, March 16, 2017, https://inferno-magazine.com/2017/03/16/jimmie-durham-at-the-center-of-the-world-hammer-museum-l-a/.

21. Steve Russell, "Rachel Dolezal Outs Andrea Smith Again; Will Anybody Listen This Time?" *Indian Country Today Media Network*, July 1, 2015, https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/native-news/rachel-dolezal-outs-andrea-smith-again-will-anybody-listen-this-time/.

22. Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Mark: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 36.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid, 40, 43.

25. Ward Churchill, "Nobody's Pet Poodle: Jimmie Durham, an Artist for Native North America," in *From a Native Son: Selected Essays on Indigenism, 1985–1995* (Boston: South End Press, 1996).

26. For the sake of clarity, and to avoid homogenization, I use the term *Cherokee art* within the broad definition of art informed by historical aesthetics and materials, and/or work created by an artist recognized by the Cherokee communities. Just like American art, there is no singular definition of Cherokee art.

27. Jonathan Griffin, "Elements from the Actual World," *Art in America*, April 25, 2017, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/elements-from-the-actual-world-63259/.

28. Jonathan Griffin, "Issues & Commentary: Jonathan Griffin Responds," *Art in America*, August 15, 2017, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/issues-commentary-jonathan-griffin-responds-63286/.

29. For a more in-depth explanation of the Durant *Scaffold* controversy, see Sheila Dickinson, "'A Seed of Healing and Change': Native Americans Respond to Sam Durant's 'Scaffold,'" *ARTnews*, June 5, 2017, https://www.artnews.com/art-news/artists/a-seed-of-healing-and-change-native-americans-respond-to-sam-durants-scaffold-8454/.