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Review of *Dimensions of Native America: The Contact Zone* An Exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Florida State University

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Dimensions of Native America: The Contact Zone. An Exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Florida State University. Edited and co-curated by Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk and Robin Franklin Nigh. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998. Illustrations, maps, catalogue of exhibition. 144 pp. \$20.00 paper.

The purpose of the Florida State University art exhibit and its accompanying catalogue is to offer an examination of "acculturated art forms made by both Native Americans and Euroamericans that deliberately converge with and often appropriate each other's cultural

properties." This ambitious project was launched in Florida in the spring of 1998 with an amazing spectrum of representative works from pre-Columbian contact to the present. The listing of displayed works is a mere appendix to a broad range of essays that explore issues of "Artification of the Indigenous Artifact," "Blurred Boundaries," "Misconceptions," "Photographs," and "Contemporary Native and Non-Native Artists."

Co-curator and editor Teilhet-Fisk indicates that the exhibit was designed by a class of combined graduate and undergraduate students, implying that the accompanying essays come from the class as well; but apart from the curators and three Native consultants, the backgrounds of fifteen authors are not identified. Indeed, several of the essays read like student research papers by depending heavily on secondary sources and restating fundamental knowledge. For example, the essay on silversmithing simplifies and geographically misstates: "The Diné, more commonly known as the Navajo, are located in northeastern Arizona, while the Zuni are located in northwestern New Mexico." Some of the essays have inexplicable omissions as well. Marie Watkins's otherwise fine essay on painter Joseph Henry Sharp examines his crusade to depict "authentic" Indians of the Plains, but fails to mention Sharp's well-documented association with the Taos Society of Artists. Co-curator Nigh's otherwise perceptive evaluation of contemporary American Indian artists overlooks the wry wit in many of the works. Teilhet-Fisk's discussion of Star Quilts does not consider either Beatrice Medicine and Patricia Albers's excellent discussion of Plains Star Quilts or Roberta Hill Whiteman's (Oneida) acclaimed poem, "Star Quilt."

On the whole, however, the essays—illustrated with black-and-white photos—sensitive and smartly assess complicated issues of cultural contact and mediation, artistic representation and transformation, commodity and aesthetics. The authors expand their discussions beyond the pieces in the exhibit to consider how specific works epitomize historical

and contemporary topics of race relations and identity. *Studies on Seminole Patchwork*, *Native Captives'* depictions of St. Augustine, the duality of portrayals of Osceola, photography of non-Native Kasebier and Native Tsinhnahjinnie (Seminole, Creek, and Diné) all contribute to a critical "contact zone." This

broad range of artistic examples and thoughtful discussion is an admirable overview of Native American artistic representations.

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