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Review of *Art Quantum: The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, 2009* edited by James H. Nottage with Jennifer Complo McNutt and Ashley Holland

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Art Quantum: The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, 2009. Edited by James H. Nottage with Jennifer Complo McNutt and Ashley Holland. Indianapolis, IN: Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, 2009. 96 pp. Photographs, notes. \$26.95 paper.

This catalogue, published on the occasion of the sixth biennial exhibition honoring the 2009 winners of the prestigious Eiteljorg Fellowship, follows the format established in earlier iterations: a lead essay by a noted critic or scholar of contemporary Native American art (who also served as a jurist on the Fellowship's independent selection panel), accompanied by five interpretive essays on each of the award recipients written by different artists or scholars and amply illustrated with high-quality reproductions of the artists' work.

Paul Chaat Smith (Associate Curator, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian) contributes the lead essay, a characteristically highly stylized and oblique piece. His diversionary tactics are frustrating (if understandable) here, because they completely overwhelm the important challenge he sets out in his final paragraphs, where he calls on Native artists to relinquish “easy targets and tiresome rhetoric.”

Stating that “ideas and circumstances . . . are aligning in ways that offer new opportunities and new responsibilities,” Smith cites the election of Barack Obama (“the American president [who] is black and white, African and American, of Kansas and Kenya”) as one indicator that “a cultural shift is taking place that increasingly understands race is fiction, racism is not, and that essentialist ideas about racial purity are losing ground.” Accordingly, he urges Native American artists to move beyond strategic essentialism and engage “the biggest questions of their time.”

The title of the book in which Smith’s essay appears doesn’t ameliorate the situation, good intentions notwithstanding, and a prefatory essay explaining the choice of title unintentionally sets in relief some of the internal contradictions surrounding the Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, as laudable, generous, and farsighted as it is.

The best of the individual artist essays establish baseline biographical contexts and helpfully highlight the artists’ personal preoccupations and the themes or concepts animating their art. Art historian and artist Gail Tremblay writes informatively and lucidly on painter Jim Denomie, as does curator Lee-Ann Martin on Canadian multimedia artist Faye HeavyShield. But artist Alfred Young Man’s discussion of Canadian recipient Edward Poitras is confusing, compromised by the author’s ambitious attempt to educate readers simultaneously about Canadian race relations, politics, and First Nations art history. The catalogue is completed with essays by artist Jimmie Durham on Jeffrey Gibson, and art historian Polly Nordstrand on Wendy Red Star.

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