

Book Reviews

Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900. Ruth B. Phillips.
334 pages.

Reviewed by *Arlette M.S. Barrette*

Ruth B. Phillips has produced a wonderful opportunity to explore the intricacies of the development and adaptations of traditional artistic methods during two centuries of cultural upheaval. In her book she combines art appreciation and anthropology, using illustrations to document her evidence, and offers a text that is informative and accessible to a wide variety of readers.

I have enjoyed this book. I read it as a reflection of the history of the people whose lives intermingled through the production and acquisition of the souvenir items. Beginning with the cover picture the visual interest is maintained throughout with a variety of illustrations supporting the text. Some of the items illustrated are truly exquisite artistic expressions; others reflect the growing European influence and exploitation of the "exotic." The "noble savage, the warrior, the maiden, the princess," the tipi, and the exporting of these symbols as representation of Native peoples emerge from these pages. These images would prove enduring as they have survived to this day. Another facet of this documentation reveals the adaptation of northeastern Native peoples over 200 years to the various changes in their environment and in their ways of life. Here the reader can follow the settlement of the Northeast as it affects daily life as exemplified by the seasonal importance of tourism to economic survival.

The items and their fabrication reveal the Native peoples' desire to survive. By producing goods that would be aesthetically appealing according to the standards of the day, they provided the buyers personally or domestically useful items made from readily available natural materials. The result is the preservation of traditional uses of natural resources and methods of production, patterns, and knowledge and their more recent adaptation to new art forms and media. In this sense Phillips documents an artistic survival, a struggle against assimilation, that is invisible because it is so visible and apparently harmless in beads, quills, hides, and baskets. The documentation and validation of Native people's artistic survival and resistance to cultural extinction are the hidden message of this book. Ultimately, what is revealed is the survival and preservation of the necessary knowledge and expertise that flowed from one generation to the next. The current resurgence of these artistic traditions allows them finally to be recognized as an integral part of Canadian artistic heritage. Furthermore, by treating only the artistic expressions of the Northeast, Phillips allows for the unique relationship to the environ-

ment to be highlighted. The ecological and environmental impact of colonization is thus better appreciated when urbanization occurs in the industrialization period in the late 19th century.

Phillips' scholarship is evidenced by the richness of supporting references. The variety of sources and notes supporting the text are informative, revealing, and at times surprising: historical, religious, social, public, and private sources. Yet she has kept her text accessible by allowing the reading levels to vary: the introduction can be intimidating with its use of academic terms, but overall the text is readable at a high school level.

The book is printed on quality alkaline paper, the black and white and color illustrations are clearly reproduced; its slightly wider format allows it to stand out among other sources. I find it noteworthy that the glued soft cover hides a stitched binding that would keep the book together even with frequent and repeated usage. It is good value for the price.

Although the illustrations are reminiscent of *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*, this book is a worthy addition to the literature and a useful contribution for the scholar, the researcher, the historian, the artist, and for anyone else interested in Native artistic traditions, development, and expression. I recommend this book for its richness and scholarship, and because regardless of a reader's primary interest, it provides more than is expected. Now, having limited her exploration to one area of the North American continent, Phillips has the opportunity to continue this exploration and documentation from region to region. This is a task that I hope she will accept and pursue.

Teaching in a Cold and Windy Place: Change in an Inuit School, Joanne Tompkins. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1998. 153 pages.

Reviewed by *Stan Wilson*

This book is an excellent portrayal of the author's experiences as a principal involved in initiating change. Set in the frustrating conditions of a cycle of failure all too familiar to many Aboriginal communities, Tompkins addresses the challenge of making her school work for the students rather than against them. Educators who have faced teaching in similar cross-cultural conditions will no doubt recognize the situation: one for which white, middle-class teachers are usually completely unprepared.

Tompkins offers hope that simple structural changes can make gigantic differences. Chapters four, five, and six are the strength of the monologue. They describe program changes that result in successful experiences for both teachers and students—changes that involve the principal as primary change agent. Through a process of "theming and teaming" her staff begins to take responsibility for collective management rather than work-

ing in isolation from one another. This leads to the development of learning centers and to the reorganizing of group instruction.

As teachers begin to infuse cultural and linguistic components into their planning, they begin to realize the need for restructured groupings. Along with this challenge comes the realization of the need for more Native Inuit speakers. Rather than hiring qualified teachers to meet southern standards, this problem is solved by hiring local people who have the required cultural knowledge and interest in working with children. These new "teachers-in-training" create an interactive climate in the school as both teachers and teachers-in-training rely on one another in order to deliver a pedagogically sound program of studies.

My only difficulty with this text is that Tompkins states that her book is written for the residents of the Baffin region. My own sense is that it would appeal more to southern teachers interested in Northern education. The terms *Eskimo*, *Neo-Eskimo*, *Inuit*, and *Inuk* are used interchangeably. My understanding is that the residents of the area would use the terms *Inuit* and *Inuk* to refer to themselves, whereas the terms *Eskimo* and *Neo-Eskimo* set the author apart because they are used by an outsider to refer to the people of the area.

The author also distances herself from the people for whom she seeks to write when she accepts the archeological premise of their origin in the region. Many Inuit people have their own version of how they came to inhabit that region, and this version is not represented, so although her past experience as an instructional support teacher allows her to bring credibility to the change process and to empathize with both teachers and students, it does not contain an Indigenous voice. This voice, combined with a clearer description of the limitations of the research methodology employed, would have strengthened the work considerably.

Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Eds.). Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 226 pages.

Reviewed by *Jean-Paul Restoule*

"This collection attempts to examine Hollywood's image, what we call 'Hollywood's Indian'—its construction, its aesthetics, its major productions, its impact, and its future" (p. 2). These are the standards editors Rollins and O'Connor set for themselves. In terms of examining the construction and aesthetics of Hollywood's Indian, the book does an admirable job. In particular, P.T. Strong's piece on the commodification of children's culture and Native people is effective in portraying the construction of a media image and makes a worthy model for future students of media to emulate in the study of cultural products.

In terms of including major productions, the editors have selected pieces on the most representative and influential Hollywood films with Indian subjects including analyses of *Broken Arrow*, *Little Big Man*, and *Dances With Wolves*. Five of the 12 essays discuss recent films (of the last decade), starting with Baird's excellent study of *Dances With Wolves* and touching on the most popular productions of the 1990s. Jojola's contribution surveys recent material and commendably brings into the book some of the most significant Canadian films on Indian subjects to emerge in the 1990s. A book on Aboriginal people in film should include Canadian media images and stories, because much of what has been produced in Canada is more complex than the standard Hollywood fare, making it a worthy and important point of comparison. This point is especially important when one considers the editorial choice to include a Finnish contribution as evidence of the global influence of Hollywood's Indian images. Although this interesting contribution demonstrates how America's film myth of the "idealized west" has been transposed to an "idealized north" in Finnish productions, certainly space could, and should, have been made for a study of Canadian images and how these myths are taken up and sometimes problematized.

Although *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) should not have been included, the essay by Walker seems more concerned about the century-old novel than the Mann film or other cinematic versions of the tale. Of course, the impact and interplay of these images as they move from one medium to another is important to trace, but it seems that Walker wishes to analyze the aesthetic differences between the media rather than the critical and political choices implicit in the making of the film. In a book titled *Hollywood's Indian* one expects more critical analysis; which leads me to another point. The analyses of these films come mainly from male writers. More views from a woman's perspective would have made a more balanced and interesting book. For example, had the editors been able to locate or include articles in the manner of Ellen Arnold's "Reframing the Hollywood Indian: A Feminist Re-reading of *Powwow Highway* and *Thunderheart*," our perspective on the Indian image would have been challenged doubly. This slim (226 pages) volume certainly could have included an essay or two like Arnold's as well as one on major Canadian productions such as *Black Robe* (co-produced with Australia) or *Dance Me Outside*.

The greatest strength of *Hollywood's Indian* is that it focuses sustained attention on images of Aboriginal peoples in recent films, whereas few books do this. The collected essays of Ward Churchill in *Fantasies of the Master Race* are a remarkable contribution, as are those appearing in Elizabeth Bird's *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*. Daniel Francis has written *The Imaginary Indian*, an admirable book studying the popular image of the "Indian" in the

Canadian context, which complements the landmark work of Berkhofer's largely American *The White Man's Indian*. All these books devote some space to the study of filmed images of Aboriginal peoples, but not in as much depth as is possible with the collection assembled for *Hollywood's Indian*. This book appears to be the first to attempt to fill this void, and as valuable and welcome as it is, it could have been much stronger.

References

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