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mentor's introduction

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Barry Lopez (1976) told of a mythical history professor who spoke in a conference presentation about the winter counts of Sioux, Blackfeet and Crow peoples as personal, metaphorical histories that contributed to a larger, tribal history. He cautioned that "As professional historians, we have too often subordinated one system to another and forgotten all together the individual view, the poetic view, which is as close to the truth as the consensus" (p. 61). It is such a poetic view that Julia Kellman presents in her accounts of three Maya women weaving. Through the method of narrative interpretation with which art education research at The University of Iowa is associated, she tells the stories of these individual women weaving huipiles in the context of their daily lives in three different communities. We may glean from their particular histories some sense of weaving in the larger Maya and Guatemalan histories and, perhaps, even beyond that context intimations of art making in all our lives.

Ms. Kellman's research, too, has a history and readers of her dissertation will learn more of that than this abbreviated paper can reveal. She came to doctoral study in art education as a painter and teacher, already acutely conscious of the import of culture on the meaning of art in our lives, and as an experienced researcher in Iowa Native American art. Anthropology was an appropriate choice for her related area of study, and it was through this work that she became intrigued by Guatemalan women's huipiles. Already conversant in Spanish, she spent her first summer in Guatemala living with a local family, studying and speaking Spanish intensively, while exploring communities in the region and establishing preliminary relationships with women weavers in the area. With this background she was able during her second summer in Guatemala to focus on the three women who are portrayed in the following account as well as in her dissertation.

"The truth," Barry Lopez wrote, "is something alive and unpronouncable. Story creates an atmosphere in which it becomes discernable as pattern" (1988, p. 69). In the story Ms. Kellman tells, readers may discern such a pattern.

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