

Mentor's Introduction

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mentor's introduction

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I am excited about Jill's thesis on issues surrounding Native American art in a museum. It is well conceived, significant, and timely. Non-Native American art in a museum. Non-Native American scholars in the arts and humanities are becoming more sensitive to the complexity of contemporary Native American issues. Recent legislation concerning artifacts in museums has helped make the world outside Native America more aware of the different contexts for understanding and valuing these artifacts. Issues of who speaks for whom and when are closely related to who teaches whom. While attending the Native American Art Studies Association meeting, Jill recently witnessed just how controversial these issues are. She returned with stories of impassioned soliloquies and heated debates. This is why I say her study is timely. Its careful conception, as the study of one museum (with a situating of this museum within others) helps insure its significance. The Iroquois Museum, in allowing her to explore the close association of Iroquois curators with those not of non-Iroquois heritage, is particularly appropriate. While it has relevance to education, it is education in the broader sense that I believe is encompassed by the humanities, for her study is very much involved with culture and art. It has the potential to offer groundbreaking insights at a fertile moment into the understanding and re-valuing of Native American artifacts and contemporary cultures.

Jill has spent a significant portion of her studies at Penn State working with Native American culture and the arts. She has studied the art, culture, history, and education of numerous groups, particularly those in the northeastern U.S.. Her academic expertise and inherent energies are enhanced by a professional background in museums. It has been a pleasure working with her as well as a privilege. As a student participant myself in the Graduate Research presentations, I am particularly pleased to again be a part of this ongoing tradition, and thank Steve Thunder McGuire for his energies in stewarding it.