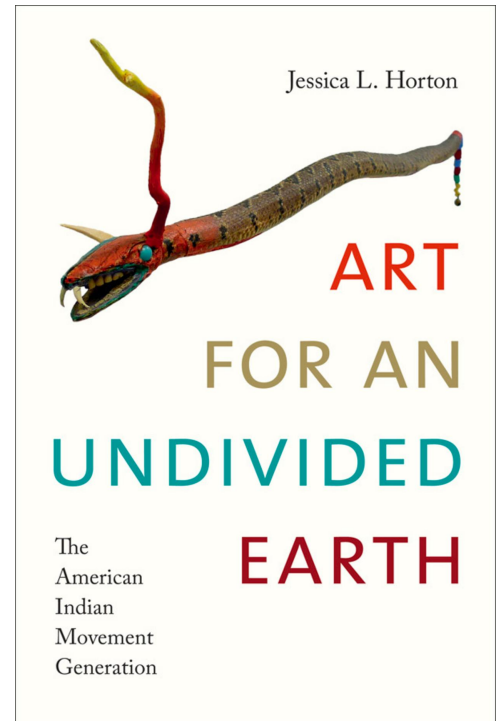


Jessica L Horton, *Art for an Undivided Earth: The American Indian Movement Generation*

Duke University Press, 2017, 312pp,  
121 illustrations (including 59 colour plates)

Amber Hickey



As a settler scholar who also writes about Indigenous visual culture, I recognise how careful we must be with this work. There was never a good excuse for reaffirming stereotypes and contributing to the perpetuation of violent structures that Indigenous peoples have been struggling against for centuries. We still have no excuse. Settler scholars have a responsibility to cede space to Indigenous voices and visions. When we do not cede space, we have a responsibility to use the platforms we have to intentionally struggle against colonial legacies. In many ways Horton does so in this book; but she does not go far enough.<sup>1</sup>

*Art for an Undivided Earth* treads a line that makes it difficult for the reader to understand Horton's aims and the stakes of this research. From one angle, Horton seems to be intervening in art historical discourse in such a way that acknowledges the far-reaching contributions of the five artists whose work she focuses on. But she falls short of addressing both the framework in which they were intervening (the global art world) and the specific positions of each of these artists in relation to the American Indian Movement (and, in Jimmie Durham's case, the community he claims). In other words, Horton does an excellent job illuminating the ways in which Indigenous artists have claimed ground for themselves in the global art world, but does not problematise this world or the way in which it has long undermined Indigenous peoples.

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<sup>1</sup> This review has come together alongside several discussions about the book with colleagues and friends. I want to extend extra gratitude to Chelsea Herr and Lorraine Affourtit for thinking through key issues with me.

In this nonetheless carefully researched volume, Horton identifies a group of artists whose work exemplifies grounded, yet global creative engagements that explicitly stand up against the divisions that are still commonplace in art historical discourse. As a framing mechanism, Horton draws a connection between the pan-Indian activism of the American Indian Movement as well as the transnational and transtemporal connections evident in the work of Jimmie Durham, James Luna, Fred Kabotie, Kay WalkingStick and Robert Houle. In her quest to challenge the ways in which these artists are often situated in relation to the broader art world, Horton eschews identity politics, instead uniting these artists within a framework of ‘shared historical and conceptual terrain ...’.<sup>2</sup>

Despite positioning herself decidedly against identity politics, Horton does address identity at many points throughout the book. Horton’s argument may be more effective if she were to define what identity politics means to her, and specify which elements of identity politics she would like to problematise. In her discussion of Kay WalkingStick’s work, it seems that Horton is simply against the ways in which identity has been used to categorise and divide artists, rather than attend to their common concerns. The connection between the American Indian Movement and the artistic practices discussed could also be developed in greater detail. Rather than being central to the trajectory of these artists’ practices, the connection often seems tangential. In the future, I look forward to reading more from Horton on the ways in which the American Indian Movement – which still exists – continues to inform contemporary artists. Many readers might also be curious to know how the American Indian Movement influences activist artists, rather than artists who situate their work primarily in the art world.

The volume opens with a discussion of Jimmie Durham’s work. Horton begins by showing how his work illustrates the ways in which positionality extends beyond the individual and collective, and into entire epistemologies of space and kinship. This argument would be more effective if Horton framed Durham’s work more carefully. Considering the number of pages devoted to Durham in this volume, I am left wondering why Horton does not substantively address the debate regarding Durham’s contested Cherokee identity. I know as well as Horton likely does that it is not our place to police Durham’s identity. I also like his work, and appreciate everything it has taught me. However, those who write about Durham’s work have a responsibility to acknowledge the very clear call by many members of the Cherokee Nation to stop accepting Durham’s claim to Cherokee identity.<sup>3</sup> Accepting his claim without question undermines the many community

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<sup>2</sup> Jessica Horton, *Art for an Undivided Earth: The American Indian Movement Generation*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2017, p 17

<sup>3</sup> ‘Dear Unsuspecting Public, Jimmie Durham Is a Trickster’, *Indian Country Today*, 26 June 2017: [https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/dear-unsuspecting-public-jimmie-durham-is-a-trickster-Rk7\\_oZ6TPkmIIQLNjN-gPw](https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/dear-unsuspecting-public-jimmie-durham-is-a-trickster-Rk7_oZ6TPkmIIQLNjN-gPw)

members who have done the deeply challenging labour of speaking out. I appreciate the resolve with which Horton affirms Durham's indigeneity – this can easily be read as an act of trust in his self-identification, which is in one sense quite beautiful. However, what does it mean that one of the most famous Indigenous artists in what is now commonly known as the United States is not claimed by the Indigenous nation he claims? And what are the stakes of a project that creates even more space for Durham, and little for those who have questioned him? Given that Horton is clearly arguing against simplistic notions of identity, a thorough accounting of these questions would have only strengthened this book.

Chapter 2, which focuses on artist James Luna's *Emendatio*, is a refreshing addition to analyses of Luna's work. While exhibition reviews and scholarly texts often focus on the more explicitly performative elements of Luna's work, Horton foregrounds the role of 'performing props' in *Emendatio*, which was presented during the 2005 Venice Biennale. *Emendatio*, Horton states, calls upon a long history of Indigenous knowledge circulation through mobilising the early nineteenth century scholarship of Pablo Tac (Payómkawichum/Luiseño). Horton shows how Luna (1950–2018, Payómkawichum, Ipi and Mexican descent) mobilises objects to illuminate the connections between Payómkawichum pasts and presents – particularly the way in which knowledge, physical practices and memories travel across geographies of time and space. Luna's *Emendatio*, Horton argues, points toward the ways in which colonial and Indigenous knowledges have long been enmeshed. Horton's discussion of the ways in which Tac and Luna address the limitations of translation and the relationship between archive and embodied performance is particularly convincing. In foregrounding Luna's work in Venice, which so clearly referenced the legacy of Payómkawichum intellectual exchange during the mission period, Horton identifies another example of Indigenous presence in global communities, and therefore Indigenous artists' role in shaping global modernities. In deeming the materials Luna mobilises in *Emendatio* 'performing props', Horton is pinpointing one key way in which Luna often disrupted the expectations of the global art world. In inviting these agentic props into the exhibition space, Luna was bridging worlds in more ways than one. Although Horton's incisive critique of the construed barriers between colonial and Indigenous visual culture offers additional complexity to the way in which the work is often understood, readers may wish that she had also critiqued modernity and the divided worlds it perpetuates.

The third chapter focuses on the often-overlooked historical legacy of Indigenous visual culture in the global biennale circuit, through the lens of Hopi artist Fred Kabotie's work. Horton reminds readers of the presence of Fred Kabotie's work in the 1932 Venice Biennale, noting that many art historians identify the 1990s as the moment in which Indigenous artists began consistently

exhibiting in the Biennale. Kabotie's paintings often centred Hopi dances, which Kabotie experienced frequently before being forced to attend a boarding school three hundred miles from his community.<sup>4</sup> Horton proposes that Kabotie's paintings are *diagrams* of ceremony, therefore creating a sense of presence and movement when viewed. The works do not seek to fully encompass the actions represented, but offer hints that function both as entry points for those who have the ability to decode them and as strategic images occluding that deemed sacred from those who might disrespect certain knowledges. Here, Horton makes a compelling case for the arts as mediums of resistance against the violence of state initiatives such as boarding schools. She states, 'Boarding schools are a quintessential case of colonial biopolitics, enacting a widespread agenda to realign indigenous spatial and temporal sensibilities toward the nation's industrial progress'.<sup>5</sup> In subtle resistance to his experience at a boarding school, Kabotie used painting as a way of envisioning remembrance, and keeping these memories present. Horton continues: 'By creating recollections of embodied culture, Kabotie worked against the federal government's goal of enforced forgetting'.<sup>6</sup> This chapter is one of the strongest in the volume, in its careful analysis of the depth and impact of Kabotie's interventions.

In Chapter 4, Horton builds upon her argument for the generative possibilities of blurring the categories through which art is often understood. She identifies the ways in which Cherokee artist Kay WalkingStick's work provides a window into a visual and material politics of connection rather than division. Drawing a throughline between pseudoscientific notions of racial difference, European classification models for flora and fauna, and the ways in which art history is organised and understood, Horton pinpoints elements of WalkingStick's work that resists such divisions, instead foregrounding that which is shared and exchanged across colonial and Indigenous histories.<sup>7</sup> Horton states, 'Her paintings picture modernity through complex figurations of belonging, giving rise to what I call *creative kinship*'.<sup>8</sup> Although I do not agree that identity politics is a politics of division (this seems to be Horton's view), Horton's acknowledgement of the role of love, care, kin and interconnection in visual culture is deeply compelling. Her visual analysis of WalkingStick's work is detailed and captivating, coaxing the reader to see what she calls 'art history's tangled legs', rather than perpetuate contrived divisions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Horton, *Art for an Undivided Earth*, p 98

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p 101

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p 112

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p 127

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p 135

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p 151

In Chapter 5, Horton challenges discourses on new materialism, proposing that these discourses are not really new.<sup>10</sup> Through a close look at Robert Houle's multimedia installation, *Paris/Ojibwa*, Horton discusses longstanding Indigenous knowledge systems that challenge the divide between humans and more-than-humans, as well as the agency of more-than-human beings. Horton shows how exhibition spaces can be sites in which more-than-humans may express agency in relation with their human visitors. Rather than accepting the notion that the museum is a mausoleum, and that 'when other-than-human persons pass through the doors of modern institutions, they are stripped of their potency and left for dead', Horton refuses to 'grant the museum or the auction house such totalizing power'.<sup>11</sup> Here, Horton attends to the complex relations circulating within art spaces, reminding viewers that they – as well as the more-than-humans they share space with – are *participants*.

Although the illumination of overshadowed histories of trans-Indigenous struggle and visibility is deeply valuable, Horton's study would have benefited from a critique of the international bodies that she seeks to show consistent engagement with (the UN, the biennale circuit and the global art world).<sup>12</sup> While Horton acknowledges the colonial history of biennale culture, her analysis immediately turns back to the power of these artists' work to 'transcend' such legacies.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps we should ask, can the biennale's history and continuing legacy of affirming borders and state-to-state relations ever be truly transcended? Finally, Horton's bibliography retains the divisions that she espouses disagreement with. Although not completely absent from the book, there is a lack of engagement with the many Indigenous thinkers who are producing work related to visual culture. As Sara Ahmed so compellingly pointed out in 2013, citation practices are 'a rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies'.<sup>14</sup> The silences in Horton's project undermine her overall argument, which is in itself compelling. Perhaps this is a lesson to us all to be bolder in our interventions.

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<sup>10</sup> This argument has also been made by scholars such as Zoe Todd; see Z Todd, 'An Indigenous Feminist's Take On The Ontological Turn: "Ontology" Is Just Another Word For Colonialism', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol 29, no 1, 2016, pp 4–22, doi 10.1111/johs.12124 (originally published on Todd's blog in 2014)

<sup>11</sup> Horton, *Art for an Undivided Earth*, p 181; regarding the notion of museums as mausoleums, see Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, Samuel and Sherry Weber, trans, Neville Spearman, London, 1967

<sup>12</sup> See Chadwick Allen, *Trans-Indigenous Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2012

<sup>13</sup> Horton, *Art for an Undivided Earth*, pp 88–89

<sup>14</sup> Sara Ahmed, 'Making Feminist Points', *feministkilljoys.com*, September 11, 2013 <https://feministkilljoys.com/2013/09/11/making-feminist-points/> (cited in Eve Tuck, K Wayne Yang and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, 'Citation Practices Challenge', *Critical Ethnic Studies*, April 2015 <http://www.criticaethnicstudiesjournal.org/citation-practices>)

Despite mentioning the American Indian Movement in its title, this book is not about activism. It is, however, an important contribution to art history in its skilful analyses of these five artists' work. Each chapter successfully illuminates elements of their work that had never before been substantively considered. Scholars, students and curators seeking to challenge the ways in which the global art world is understood, as well as the ways in which Indigenous artists are situated within it, will find this book useful. These artists clearly shake up assumptions related to who 'belongs' where, through showing the complex trajectories of Indigenous presence across time and space. Through Horton's analysis of the work of these artists, who look toward the matter that connects us all, perhaps we can *begin* to imagine a truly undivided earth – or perhaps one in which divisions are seen as generative.

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