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I remain unconvinced that Indigenous people are foremost “American.” I have been dismayed at the variety of ways Indigenous peoples from this continent have been either dehistoricized or removed from the evolving present in academic discourses and museums. Often Indigenous people are stripped of unique community identities in service of citizenship or belonging in a settler nation. It is simply ahistorical to imagine Indigenous art as “American,” when those exact works have so recently been created in enmity with the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico. Native Americans have not been citizens of the United States for even a century. Native expressions of spirituality (a huge source for Native arts production) have been legal for even less time. To complicate matters further, each of the thousands of Native communities have specific protocols and cultural practices which dictate when, how, and what is viewed, and by whom. Those protocols differ from mainstream American definitions and understandings of “art.”

I have been left wondering at what cost Native artworks are considered “American” or “Native,” as though these are discrete categories. I wonder whether we claim “American” for Native arts because the knowledge about many of those expressions remains obscured by colonial taking, classifying, and looking. I wonder if we categorize some objects as “Native” because they demand a deeper examination of the implications of American nationhood on these lands. In short, I query what is lost in discourses framed toward ascendancy to the ideal of “American.”

Maybe we haven’t been ready. Maybe we will be soon.

Native nations and cultures are sovereigns unto their own multitudinous trajectories. There remains plenty of work to do to substantiate Indigenous art historical expression from the recent time when Natives were not “American.” By extension there’s work to do in examining the clever ways Native artists retain and adapt Indigenous artistic practices within the greater structures of settler nationhoods.

It would be productive to see “American” art history robustly embrace the simultaneity of Indigenous peoples’ existence in a settler nation, as well as within their own. After that, it makes sense to interrogate Native artworks as situated within the intersections of those conflicting and overlapping planes. Simultaneity is a primary theoretical concept for Native American and Indigenous studies—the notion that Indigenous communities are at once individuated with our own unique histories and identities, *and also* subject to the histories and identities of the settler nations built upon Native lands. All fields that seek any form of “decolonial” recognition of Indigenous people must adopt this concept. Lastly, Native cultural practices and artistic expression must be accepted, understood, and critically interrogated as sophisticated, thoughtful, and in relationship with the living world. These

things form the foundations of Native American art, which American art history would do well to examine and include in considerations of what it means to be “American.”