

Introduction

the art, gender, and community seminars

Cynthia Chavez Lamar

Art is still a way we can negotiate our worlds.—Sherry Farrell Racette, November 2007

I am surrounded by art and artists and have been throughout my life. As luck would have it, my current position as director of the Indian Arts Research Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, places me in the midst of a magnificent collection of Native art and also allows me to experience the creativity of the artists who pass through the artist fellowship programs. I am always inspired to create when viewing their processes of art making and their final pieces. I think of how dedicated and strong they must be to have chosen and persisted in their artistic paths. Indeed, in talking with artists and understanding their history, I am told that they have made sacrifices and passed up opportunities in order to commit themselves to their work. This seems to be particularly true of Native women artists, who manage and nurture multiple commitments: their art, business, community, and family and their own personhood. One of the few texts in the past quarter century devoted solely to Native women artists, *Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar, and Sage*, notes these same challenges:¹

How to balance family obligations with career aspirations and financial necessity with art, are difficult challenges to meet. Hard personal decisions have been made by all of the women in the show, as most of them have children and many are the sole support of their families.

Some work full-time at their art while others have sepa-

rate careers. Still others have part-time jobs that fill in to supplement their creative work. (Younger 1984:7)

Art is only one component of Native women artists' full lives. This became abundantly clear when in 2007 I convened a group of Native women artists for a seminar.

The School for Advanced Research (SAR) received funding from the Anne Ray Charitable Trust Foundation to bring together Native women artists to discuss the myriad roles, responsibilities, and commitments they have in their lives while balancing this existence with their art practice. The seminar began on November 15, 2007, when six Native women artists gathered at SAR to begin a project then titled Art, Gender, and Ceremony. The invited artists included prior Indian Arts Research Center (IARC) artist fellows, a First Nations artist, and an artist who participated in the *Deep Remembering* seminar at SAR. They were Gloria J. Emerson (Diné²), Sherry Farrell Racette (Timiskaming First Nation/Irish), Erica Lord (Athabaskan/Iñupiaq/Finnish/Swedish/English/Japanese), Felice Lucero (San Felipe Pueblo), Eliza Naranjo Morse (Santa Clara Pueblo), and Diane Reyna (Taos Pueblo/Ohkay Owingeh) (fig. 1.1). They convened for two days in the Douglas Schwartz Seminar House on the SAR campus, listening, supporting one another, and finding common ground, while I served as facilitator. For such a small group, they were diverse in age,

profession (aside from being artists), artistic media, community roles, and tribal affiliation.

The two-day meeting resulted in insightful, heartfelt, and difficult discussions regarding the role of women as Native and Artist. On the first day, the artists immediately talked about the limits placed on women's creative expression and the breakdown of Native communities due to substance abuse, health ailments, and loss of elders and knowledge. Although seemingly incongruous, these topics converged when the women began to discuss the insecurities produced by threats to cultural survival. For example, when Native languages become threatened because of elders dying or children not learning their languages, the feeling among the artists was that individual tribal members can become very strict about what they perceive to be tradition and begin to pass judgment on those who do not abide by tradition as a means to preserve traditions they feel are disappearing. This insecurity, as one artist phrased it, encourages Native people to become "gatekeepers" of culture, establishing rules that they believe protect and preserve culture and language but that instead inhibit and hurt people. Several of the artists recalled situations in which they were hurt by gatekeepers or those close to them were hurt, and they made it clear that this happened more often to Native women artists than males.

The artists spoke of history and Native women artists who have been challenged by other artists or members from their own communities about what they chose to create or depict in their art. Diane Reyna, in particular, talked about some of the early Pueblo women artists like Tonita Peña and Pablita Velarde, who challenged Pueblo norms by painting (traditionally considered a man's practice) and then depicting ceremonial dancers and dances. Helen Hardin, also a painter and Pablita Velarde's daughter, summed up Pueblo norms in the 1970s: "The traditional role is for the woman to make pots and for the man to decorate them. I spent the first six years of my life at the pueblo and I speak Tewa, so I have not been de-tribalized, but I support ERA [the Equal Rights Amendment]. Some of what happens at the pueblo is cultural and some of it is chauvinistic. They keep it pretty tight: if you want change you have to leave" (Hammond and Quick-to-See Smith 1984:39). Although times have changed, today's women artists still deal with community expectations and norms.

Gloria Emerson also referenced the Native women



Figure 1.1. *Left to right:* Eliza Naranjo Morse, Gloria Emerson, Felice Lucero, Erica Lord, Sherry Farrell Racette, and Diane Reyna in the seminar house patio. Photograph by Daniel Kurnit.

artists who were trailblazers, like Otellie Loloma, who left her Hopi home of Supawlawi (Shipaulovi) to receive art instruction in New York in 1945. When she returned to Hopi, she started teaching ceramics: "When they [Hopi people] found out that we were teaching pottery, they were all up in arms" (Younger 1984:5). She and her husband, Charles Loloma, were not even instructing their students how to make traditional Hopi/Tewa pottery. Loloma went on to become a successful ceramicist (inspired by her Hopi culture but not inclined to make traditional Hopi pottery; fig. 1.2) and spent many years instructing others in art. These early women artists challenged tribal norms by being independent and outspoken outside their communities while also working to maintain their connections to their communities. These were choices that sometimes involved risks. Sherry Farrell Racette summed up an artist's decision to challenge: "You pick and choose your lines in the sand, where you decide you're going to push it. You know there's going to be consequences for it, and you're prepared to bring it on." As Sherry indicates, Native women artists have to be ready to deal with consequences of their choices, should any arise.

In talking about their own art practice, the artists discussed the limits on their creative expression yet how, as artists, part of their job is to "cross the line." Diane commented that it "is what artists do. They're always crossing that line because they can't help it. Artists have always been doing that forever." Washoe basketmaker Sarah Jim Mayo



Figure 1.2. Bowl by Otellie Loloma, 1955. Commercial clay and glazes. Photograph by Addison Doty. School for Advanced Research, Catalog Number IAF.2517.

was ostracized and labeled a witch by other women in her community because of what they perceived to be her expressions of superiority in her community and art. Mayo wove a basket that included a portrait of herself with an inscription, which her husband gave as a gift to President Woodrow Wilson:

Sarah intended this basket to represent a historic communication between herself and the President, as representatives of their two cultures.... Instead of subservience and loyal devotion that Native Americans were expected to demonstrate to white patrons and officials, Sarah's inscription [on the basket] is full of pride and independence, and represents a demand for fair treatment. (Cohodas 1986:211)

As the Mayo anecdote illustrates, sometimes crossing lines brings consequences. Gloria, the elder of the group, remarked, "I think the worst punishment is ostracism, if you're ostracized from your own people. And I think that it is a threat that is hard to understand, but it does happen. And I wonder how many times it happened with women artists who were breaking ground in a historic context."

The impetus for this discussion about choices, risk, and ostracism was the word *ceremony* in the initial title of the project, Art, Gender, and Ceremony. Artists from the Southwest voiced concerns over the word because it had the potential to signal to outsiders that they were discussing or revealing ceremonial details, which is taboo for many

Southwestern tribes. Felice Lucero reflected on the term and said, "One doesn't know how words are interpreted." Gloria also expressed her reservations about using the word in the title, because she is a Diné woman and the Diné still have very strong ceremonies: "By using *ceremony*, we would be trivializing a process that requires ritual knowledge." As an artist, her creative process was primarily a struggle. She also jokingly added that during the struggle the words she uses in the studio aren't holy, a remark that resulted in a lot of laughter and agreement among the artists.

Sherry and Erica Lord, the two women artists from outside the Southwest, had different perspectives based on their experiences and were somewhat surprised at the possibility of ostracism from one's community. Although their communities have ceremonies considered sacred or special in other ways, they also considered ceremony to be something that could be individually motivated, a perspective possibly resulting in more freedom than is found in the Southwest. Erica discussed ceremony based on where she comes from: "My perspective is different because in the north we have very little material culture and our idea of *ceremony* is ingrained in everyday activities or functions, so you can call almost anything ceremony." Gloria differed greatly; for her, "*ceremony* has the connotation of following a divine path set by the holy people and holy ones." For her to use the word *ceremony* to describe everyday activities or the creative process was improper. At the conclusion of the two-day seminar, the artists agreed to change the name of the project to Art, Gender, and Community, because of the concerns over the term *ceremony* and because the new name more adequately reflected the focus of the discussions.

For some of the artists, especially Sherry and Erica, *ceremony* was not about invoking secret knowledge or anything sacred, but part of everyday acts, such as art making. Lucy Lippard (1984:18) wrote of this distinction in *Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar, and Sage*: "The rituals of art making resemble rituals of tending to daily chores, the process of scraping animal skins or grinding corn.... Indian women weavers often welcome spirits with ceremonies of purification as they work." In speaking about beadwork, Sherry told us that when she makes items for people she cares about, she clears her mind and focuses on good thoughts so that they are part of the finished piece. Art making becomes a means for creating safe spaces. Several of the women

noted that the kitchen was often used for art making and served as a studio while also being a gathering place for family. Sherry reminisced about teaching her daughters beadwork around the kitchen table and how shared art making created these kinds of spaces: “Certain teachings, certain family stories, just certain things only happen in that space.” She referred to the dialogue that occurs as “kitchen table teachings” and remarked, “We often don’t make time for that kind of mentorship.”

Bringing this group of Native women artists together became another form of “kitchen table teachings,” as some of the younger artists, like Eliza Naranjo Morse, recognized. Eliza spent much of her time listening thoughtfully and drawing in her sketchbook while others talked. When she spoke, she brought a focus on community to the discussion by reflecting on her experiences with her own community and others. Later Eliza wrote a short narrative summarizing her thoughts on the two days:

I watched my mom [well-known artist Nora Naranjo-Morse] washing dishes with a new awareness after the Art, Gender, and Community seminar. She grew up in the pueblo at a time when there were no televisions in the pueblo. Her family depended on hunting, her father’s work as a Baptist missionary, donations, and farming to support the large family of nine. Tewa was their first language, and their lives were centered around the village. She grew up in a generation of immense change, but her foundation was strong in a way of living that echoed the way Pueblo people had always lived. Women like Diane and Felice share this unique time and place that no longer exists. Today our sense of culture is tied to more abstract definitions of what we do to make us who we are as Native people.

The generational gap between the younger and older artists was evident in only a few instances, primarily when they were speaking of community experiences. I sensed that the younger artists felt some longing for what seemed to them to be the stronger foundations in culture and language and more clearly defined identities of the older artists.

Identity was also talked about at length, directly and indirectly. Interesting discussions arose around the idea of “living in two worlds,” which is often referenced in popular and academic literature when writing about Native people who have a connection to their home communities but also live in mainstream society. A couple of the younger artists

expressed very strong opinions about the concept. Erica adamantly stated, “I reject the idea of walking in two worlds,” and Eliza said, “There are not two worlds. There is just one world I’m living. Realizing that has been a huge relief for me.” “Two worlds” indicates an acceptance of one world, often characterized as Native and primitive, and an adaptation to the other, characterized as non-Native and civilized. Today, this dichotomy does not hold true for many Native individuals whose varied upbringing involve Native and non-Native experiences with many connections to different places, families, cultures, religions, languages, beliefs, and so on.

For the younger artists, home (where they come from) did not always mean one place. Erica let us know, “I don’t have to choose Alaska or Michigan as my home. I don’t have to choose this side or that side or this culture or that culture. Why can’t I choose all of them at the same time? It’s not someone else that makes the rules. I get to make rules about myself.” Eliza made an interesting analogy between her identity and the change she saw occurring in her community of Santa Clara:

When I was growing up, I was very aware of this transition that was happening in my pueblo, partially because I felt like I was a clear representation of this transition. Because I was half from there [Santa Clara] and I was half from somewhere else. And my mom was very tied to this place [Santa Clara], and my dad had absolutely no understanding of this world. He was just sort of dropped into it. So I grew up wanting to be a part of it and wanting to understand it and being very confused about these things.

The “things” Eliza continues on about were the discrepancies seeming to exist in the Pueblo world as it changed. She mentions giving of herself in ceremonies, by participating in dances that were prayers for rain and the growth of crops, and at the same time seeing the pueblo-owned golf course being watered daily by the same river water that is used to grow crops in the pueblo. Despite such questioning, it was also clear that Eliza knew who she was, where she came from, and where her art fit within her existence: “Because I am a Tewa person, I am a representation of a culture that is changing. It is gaining and losing very quickly, and I strive to make my art an accurate and respectful example of this transformation.” Interestingly, Eliza’s art

makes use of the natural pigments her family uses to make pottery and other ceramics—she paints with these natural clay pigments on canvas, combining two artistic traditions in her art.

Identity questions often revolved around the fact that those artists of mixed heritage felt their identities being defined by rigid ideas of authentic Native identity, which are often based on stereotypes developed over centuries about Native peoples, especially Native women. Native cultural authenticity is typically linked to ideas about physical appearance and blood quantum requirements. For those artists of mixed ancestry, such “physical qualifiers” do not reflect the current realities in Indian Country or across the globe, for that matter. Erica talked about one of her past works that dealt directly with the blood quantum issue:

I made my own [Athabaskan] baby belt. Instead of tassles, I put measuring cups and beads. I wrote in red beads, “Has the Native been bred out of my child?” which I guess is this rhetorical question because I think a lot about blood quantum and the way that the system is set up. There’s no way my child would be considered Native. And so I think, “Aren’t they Native because of what I teach them?” I can teach them beadwork and bring them back to this environment. Or is it because of this silly measuring tool?

Blood quantum requirements for official tribal membership are increasingly problematic because the reality is that many Native people may not be able to meet the minimum requirements (typically, one-quarter Native blood) for eligibility for enrollment because of intermarriage with non-Natives and people from other Native tribes.

Rather than compartmentalize identity, artists like Erica would prefer that the entirety of their experiences and heritage be considered as the basis for who they are. Many artists continue to support “two world” narratives because it is their experience; however, the contemporary dialogues of Native artists also support the idea that everything is not so cut and dried. Identity can be complicated, and this is expressed in their art. On Erica’s website, she states:

My culture and idea of home is tied to Alaska, and I think it is these origins—a lineage that I was born into, and a land I was removed from, my cultural limbo and precarious balances—these have molded my identity and fueled my art. Because of circumstance or chance, I became an emigrant

to my home and in some respects to my culture. It is through art or ritual that I discover ways to find a root and affirm my position as a shifting self, understanding that in order to survive, identity and culture cannot be static. In order to sustain a genuine self, I create a world in which I shift to become one or all of my multiple visions of self.

Many of Erica’s works question “authentic Native” identity narratives. She often uses her body in these works, challenging viewers’ preconceived notions of what a Native person looks like with additional messages about Native women, exoticism, and violence.³ Some of her images confront the viewer with stereotypes formulated in early photography of the Other, which often featured half-dressed or naked women in their “primitive state.” Erica uses these original referents to draw the viewer in (as in *The Tanning Project*; see fig. 3.1), but her careful treatment of the photograph’s content puts her in control of its message. Thereby, she engages stereotypes in the way that Nancy Mithlo (2008:117) explains:

Th[e] communicative process is a key consideration for how Native women grapple with the imposed identity references of others and thus form new self-referents in response. Instead of rejecting or eliminating the false stereotypes of squaw or princess, human actors can and do fashion new referents, positioning themselves in unique, complex, and layered selves that draw from, but are not fully inhibited by, the imposing ignorance of otherness.

Many Native women artists have addressed sexism, racism, and violence through their art. Jean LaMarr’s *Cover Girl* series reinterprets and reappropriates images of topless Native women by restoring their dignity. Lori Blondeau deconstructs images of the Indian princess and squaw in her art, prompting viewers to see these stereotypes for what they are—absurd and irrelevant to contemporary Native women’s realities. Shelley Niro refutes stereotypes of women in general and Native women in particular by presenting photos “that show a broader range of contemporary Native American experiences” (Farris 1999:56).

Many of the same topics and issues were revisited in February 2008, when the original six artists returned, having invited five additional women artists to participate in the dialogue for a session they titled “Creative Reflections of Enduring Women.” The intent of the meeting was to



Figure 1.3. *Left to right:* Lara Evans, Gloria Emerson, TahNibaa Naataanii, Diane Reyna, Heidi Brandow, Eliza Naranjo Morse, Shannon Letandre, Sherry Farrell Racette, Felice Lucero, Dyani Reynolds-White Hawk, and Erica Lord in front of the SAR reception center. Photograph by Jason Ordaz.

provide mentorship to emerging Native women artists; create a safe space for dialogue on important issues relative to their roles as women, artists, and community members; and to support and critique the development of a body of work (painting, poetry, performance art, and so on) based on the issues and ideas discussed in these sessions. The additional artists were Heidi K. Brandow (Navajo/Native Hawaiian), invited by Eliza Naranjo Morse; Lara Evans (Cherokee), invited by Erica Lord; Shannon Letandre (Anishinaabe/Cree), invited by Sherry Farrell Racette; TahNibaa Naataanii (Diné), invited by Gloria Emerson; and Dyani Reynolds-White Hawk (Sicangu Lakota/German/Welsh), invited by Diane Reyna (fig. 1.3).

In the seminar house on the first day, the original six artists gave presentations to the group about their creative process (fig. 1.4), which contextualized the way each artist developed a work. The presentations also helped introduce the new artists to this space for dialogue and creativity so that they could begin to conceptualize their creative contribution to the project. Eliza returned to the second meeting

feeling a need to do something for her community after visiting Felice Lucero at San Felipe Pueblo and learning about the farm services program that Felice manages. Gloria returned with a finished painting in hand and said, “I feel privileged in that not many Navajo women my age are indulging themselves with buying easels and expensive papers and expensive paints to work in this medium.”

Diane’s presentation impressed the group because she showed several sketches and a model of the concepts she was working through to arrive at her final work. She spoke about the word *transgression*, letting us know that she had “transgressed many times” in her life by doing things that others may have considered unacceptable because of cultural beliefs, stereotyped gender roles, and so on. She also talked about movement between places (something Erica referenced in her presentation as well) and described the sound the cattle guard makes when she crosses over onto Taos Pueblo land from non-Indian land in her car. This became the focus of her final project—the cattle guard. She shared a sketch and model of her cattle guard (figs. 1.5 and 1.6), which eventually helped



Figure 1.4. Group viewing Eliza Naranjo Morse's presentation in the seminar house. Photograph by Cynthia Chavez Lamar.

inspire her final piece (see plate 3). While away, Diane also spent time writing and shared those words with us:

Acceptance, bicultural, boundaries, unforgiving, protecting, abrasive, human, traditions, wholeness, laughter, respect, agriculture, mud houses, spirits, blessings, like pulling taffy, slowness of change, transitioning positions, home, structures, safety and security, home, scrutiny, darkness, worlds within worlds, specific centers, unspoken and unseen, carriers of secrets, holding in the heart, reciprocity of complaint, prevailing wisdom, foundations for living, obligations and responsibility, seeing and unseeing, language, words, practice, season, process, skin, transference, chosen ones, implements, beliefs, restrictions, protecting, maintaining, sacrificing, roles, mother, father, spirit mother, spirit father, outside.

After the presentations, the original six artists enthusiastically introduced their guests to the group. Gloria spoke

strongly about TahNibaa Naataanii and how gratifying it was to hear her speak at an event about the creative process:

[I've been] thinking a lot about individual women coming into my space, women who are working hard in creative fields. And that's how I thought about TahNibaa. She came at our invitation to give a talk one time about her weaving, and she didn't talk so much about technique. What I thought was so gratifying and so wonderful about TahNibaa is her creative process and her feelings for her friends, the sheep—you know, they have names and they're very important to her work—and how she cares for them, and that reminded me of my parents and how that was such an important aesthetic. It was all holistic, everything connected to one another.

TahNibaa responded by saying, "I discovered for myself that creativity is not limited to my work as a weaver only. Making tortillas is an art. Patting the dough, turning it over

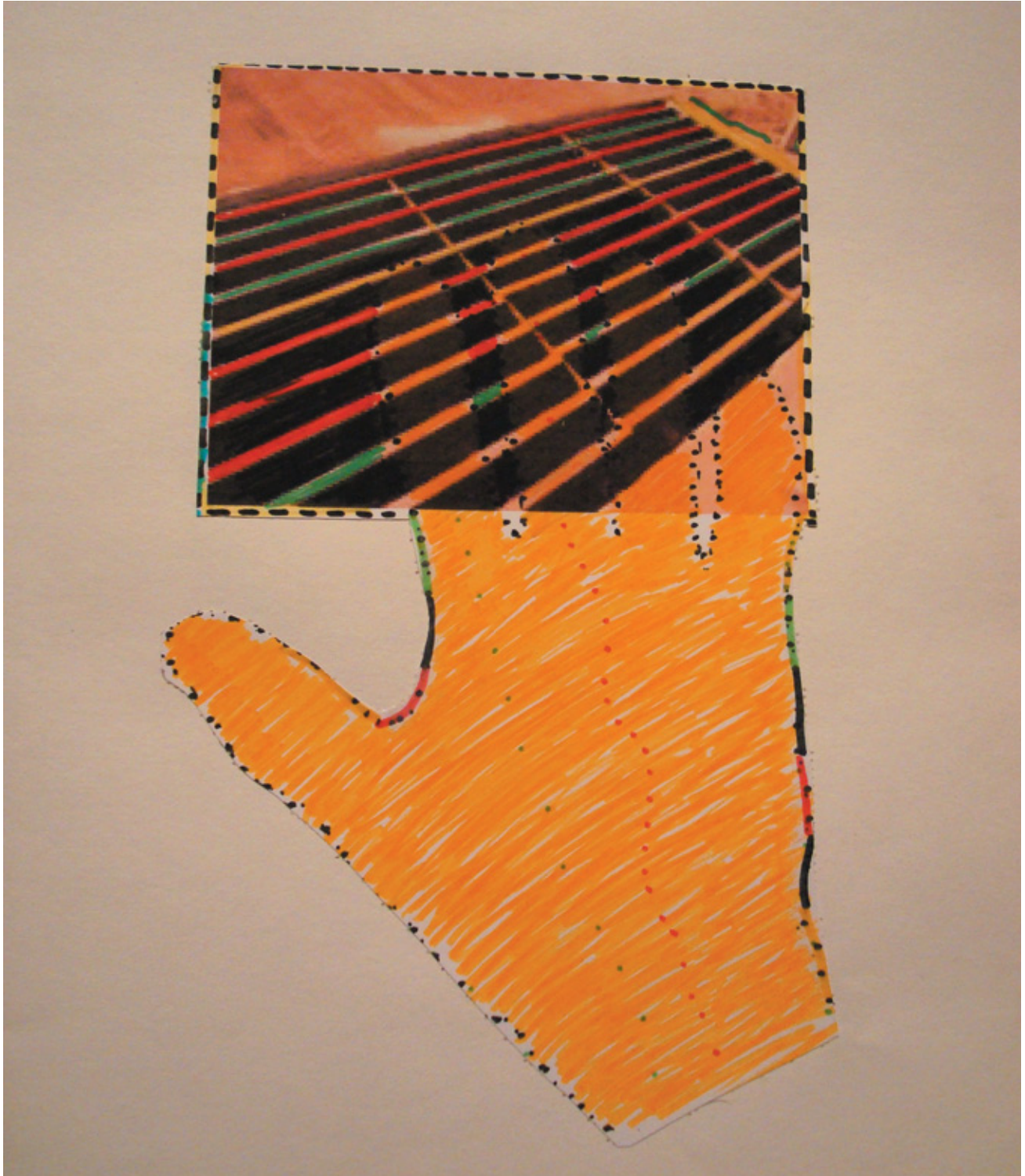


Figure 1.5. Diane's sketch. Photograph by Cynthia Chavez Lamar.



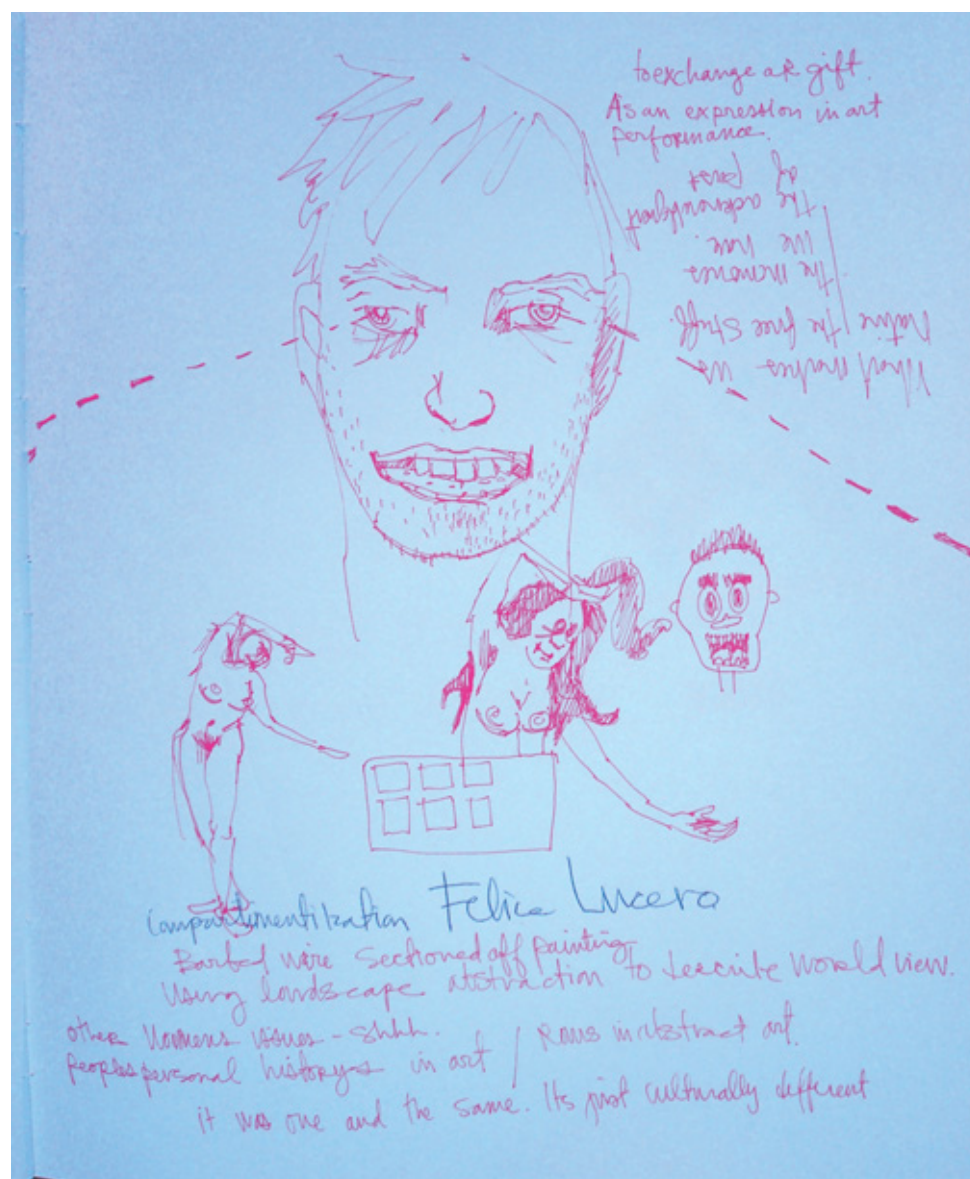
Figure 1.6. Diane's model. Photograph by Cynthia Chavez Lamar.

at just the right time when it's nice and brown. Feeding the animals so the hay in the bin is not sloppy. And folding clothes. I love to do laundry by myself early in the morning." The process of art making was a central focus of the discussions, during which the artists also acknowledged the barriers to or struggles in being creative. There was a supportive environment for the processing that was taking place for each of the artists. Eliza said she was at a place where she couldn't make anything. Others shared stories of similar artistic blocks: "One time I didn't paint for a year. Someone had said something to me that all my compositions were the same, and I could not paint for a whole year because every time I would go to those paint jars, those

words would go through my head. But then a year later, I started again and the problem was gone." Many acknowledged that even during "blocks," they are still processing and thinking and this eventually gets reflected in the art they later produce. But these blocks were also fearful times, as some expressed concern about whether the creativity was going to come back.

Finding the time to produce works was also mentioned as a challenge. Sherry said that as an academic, finding the time is difficult, especially when trying to transition from writing a paper to making a painting. Finding time to ruminate and sketch seemed essential to all of the artists' creative process. This became very evident every time we

Figure 1.7. Page from Eliza's sketchbook. Photograph by Cynthia Chavez Lamar.



met, because each one of them had a pad or sketchbook with her, on which she drew or wrote words or notes as the dialogues proceeded (figs. 1.7 and 1.8).

Dyani Reynolds-White Hawk, Shannon Letandre, and Heidi Brandow also gave brief presentations about themselves and their work. Shannon showed a short documentary that she created about her grandparents; Dyani passed around some of the beadwork she had made, as well as showing images of her paintings; and Heidi showed us her “monsters” and talked about the technique she uses to achieve a certain texture but did not reveal any specifics.

Shannon and Dyani expressed their desire to learn more about their culture. Shannon talked about living with her grandparents for two years to learn what she could during that time but realizing that a lifetime was required: “It’s sad that we have to make decisions to either stay home and learn from your grandparents or go off and create your life away from them.” Dyani shared her mother’s upbringing as an adopted Indian child in a non-Native family and her mother’s reconnection with her Native family when Dyani was a teenager: “I didn’t get to meet and start that interaction with my family until I was thirteen, so I’ve always felt

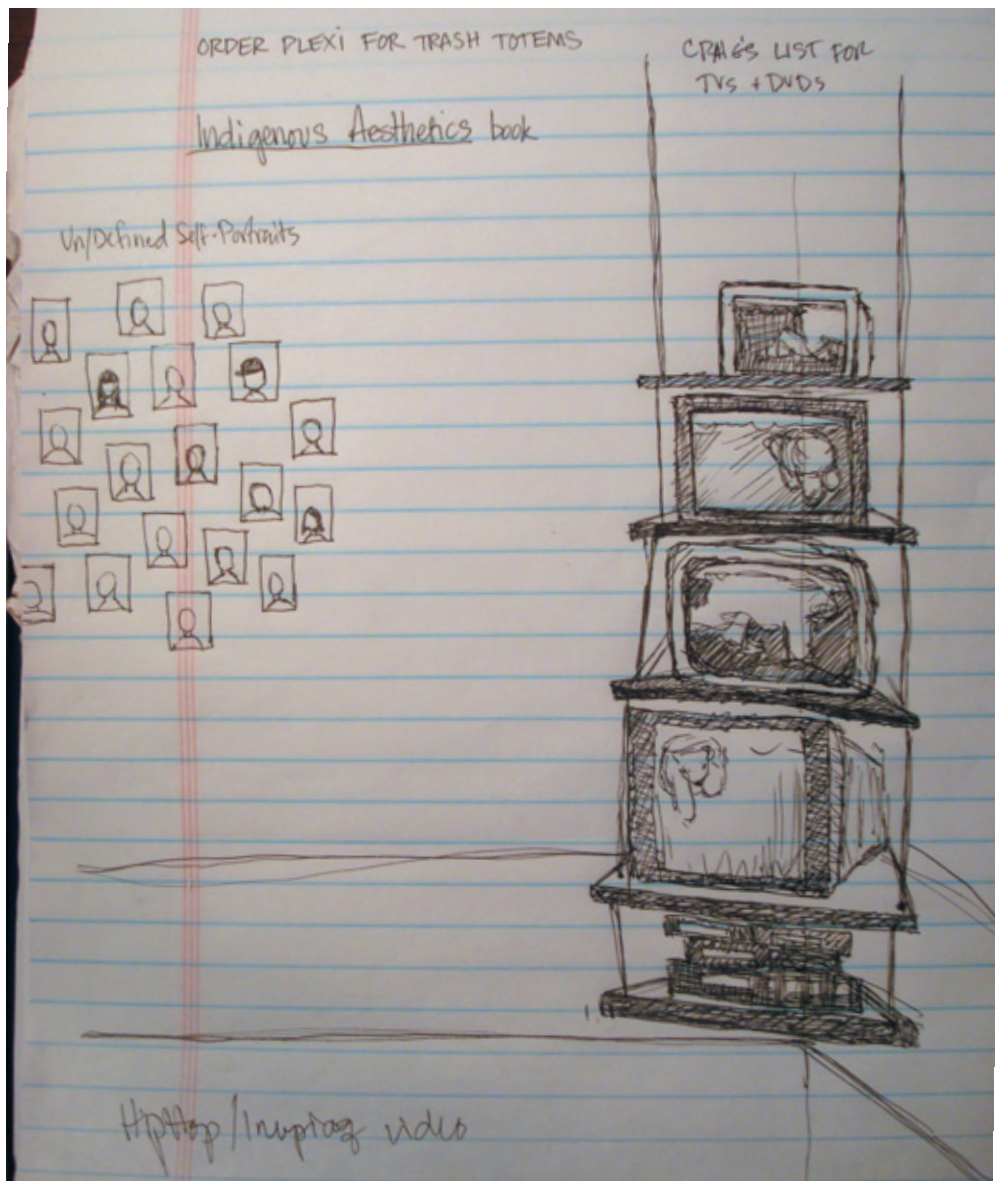


Figure 1.8. Page from Erica's notebook. Photograph by Cynthia Chavez Lamar.

like I'm still really young in my teaching because I missed the first half of my life. Since our reunion, my mom has done everything in her ability to make sure we have been surrounded by and supported and nurtured in that manner and taught as much as possible."

In a short time the group coalesced, finding that no matter their different ages, occupations, roles, or tribal affiliations, they could find common ground as artists and women. At the end of the two days, Gloria shared a poem with everyone, asking each of the original six artists to read a paragraph from the poem:

Great Woman [Cynthia Chavez Lamar] spoke.
"Women, go forth. Search for your truths. Consult your mediums, embark upon your journeys, and return with gifts of your labor." The Six Women left her presence, one muttering, "I already came full circle."

First Woman [Gloria Emerson], the grumbler, came to her crossroads, fell ill for weeks, made little notes, called her guides from the buttes. They would not speak to her until she stopped grumbling. She searched for clues, and geese flew overhead, their shadows gliding backwards to the third lake of memory and guides appeared in multitudes until First Woman bellowed, "Stop! You are too

many." In time the guides reappeared and First Woman limped to her labor.

Second Woman [Eliza Naranjo Morse] filled with youthful energy, began her quest with trepidations. Her guides nudged and referencing her people's journeys and explorations in the medium who spoke to her people for centuries and centuries. The medium whispered to Second Woman and songs poured through her, and propelled her.

Third Woman [Sherry Farrell Racette] from a far north country consulted her many sources with great care, sought connections and found them. Several guides spoke to her and helped her create little people, maps of time, and helped her bring wisdom to readers. She is to be greatly rewarded for her labor and gifts to many.

Fourth Woman [Erica Lord] also came from a far north country, from the opposite waters, and her guides sought her as she crossed continents and oceans capturing slices of time, juxtaposing them with her history and her future in their comments upon her miracles. North stars spoke to her, her pain and anguish retreated, giving her great new resolve.

Fifth Woman [Diane Reyna] came from the land of her ancestry on whose land we sat. She, too, began her journey of creativity becoming reacquainted with many muses. Several sang to her. She walked the land and found a face of iron and recalled a song of the one which spans cracks in the land. She paid homage to that. She, too, gave and is replenished.

Sixth Woman [Felice Lucero] also came from the land of her ancestry, on whose land we meet. She, too, began at the cradle of her civilization, traveled distant lands. Her muses called and sang to her until she returned to care for her people's fields, to dream, and to remember maps she had made of streams and rivers of life. These treasures she reviewed and was guided to share.

Great Woman [Cynthia] called the six women, and said, "It is time to share the results of your labor," and they came and shared the memories of their journeys. Only the First Woman didn't really speak her full truths. She didn't speak of her grumblings and was nudged and pinched (by her guides) several times as she spoke.

All women rejoiced as they shared their narratives [with] Great Woman.

They left knowing that they would return in June with finished works.

In June 2008 the eleven artists returned to Santa Fe to share their completed works with one another and the general public. This session was titled "Playing, Remembering, Making: Art in Native Women's Lives." The day included a closed session, with the artists presenting to one another their finished pieces (fig. 1.9). Later in the day, the public was invited to an exhibition of the works and panel discussions with the artists. The artworks were diverse in media and content and are featured in the plates of this volume, along with the artist statements that accompanied the pieces in the exhibit.

The next day, the artists met for a final time in the seminar house to discuss the event, their finished work, and the direction and details of a publication. The chapters in this book reflect some of the common emerging themes from the sessions. Originally, we had identified four themes but ultimately reduced them to three: gender, home/crossing, and art as healing/art as struggle. We are thankful that three of the artists agreed to contribute essays to this book, which is significant because they provide first-person perspectives on their experiences as Native, Woman, and Artist.

The editors also thought it important to have an essay about Native women artists as part history and part contemporary perspective in the twenty-first century because it has been too long since a book focused primarily on this group. It seems fitting to conclude with a quote by Lucy Lippard as her words still ring true today for Native women artists:

Armed with humor and beauty, they have overcome the obstacles, educated themselves in both the old ways and the new, and have developed an art that maintains spiritual contact with the past while opening new doors for the future. Beyond individual creation, these artists are empowering their own sisters and teaching others about the realities of Native life. (1984:20)

To all the women who shared their time, intellect, and humor in the Art, Gender, and Community seminars, I say thank you.



Figure 1.9. Artists listening to presentation on Sherry's final piece, *Panabekwe*. *Left to right*: Dyani Reynolds-White Hawk, Lara Evans, Heidi Brandow, Diane Reyna, and Gloria Emerson. *Backs to camera*: Erica Lord and Sherry Farrell Racette. Photograph by Sylvanus Paul.



Plate 2. Gloria J. Emerson, *Untitled*, 2008. Acrylic and mixed media on paper. Photograph by Addison Doty.

This art work is a statement about the economic controls on Navajo women's art that have persisted for over a century. In this work, Navajo traditional, cultural, and spiritual teachings conflict with mainstream America's expectations and influences.—*Gloria J. Emerson*





Plate 3. Diane Reyna, *The Crossing*, 2008. Sandstone, red willow, and steel. Photograph by Addison Doty.

This piece is about the transitional moment when I cross over into Pueblo society.—*Diane Reyna*