AIS 10  Student Projects:  Katsina/Kachina:
Tradition, Appropriation, Innovation

Goal: To understand some of the issues which concern Native Americans about the ways their culture is represented in the public sphere of the national culture. To understand that all cultures change and that the products of change due to culture contact are not to be villified merely because they are not identical with those of a past that is thought to be more authentic. Rather it is up to each cultural group, and ultimately to each of its members to select from available options and balance tradition with innovation.

Brief Summary of Project: Students will attend the exhibit Katsina/Kachina which is currently presented in UCLA's Fowler Museum. They will do a self-guided tour of the exhibit and select two different works for their special attention. One of these works should be chosen because it reveals innovation by the artist, The other should be chosen because it reveals appropriation--the cultural "rip-off" or commoditization of cultural artifacts which were previously "not for sale." Using information available in the exhibit, information handed out in class, as well as relevant readings and lectures, students should answer the following four questions within about 5 pages. No additional sources are required.

1. Describe the objects you have selected. Where possible note the artist and his or her background.
2. How do the images relate to traditional Hopi culture and the role of katsinam in Hopi life? What is their religious and other cultural significance? In sum, how do these objects acquire their cultural meaning? Why is the representation of these forms controversial to most Hopi people?
3. What is innovative about these works? Is this a work designed to be given away at a katsina ceremony or is this a work primarily produced for a buyer who is probably non-Hopi? What influence does the marketplace seem to exert on the artist who produced this work? To what extent does this work appear to attempt to connect to tradition and to what extent is it merely unconstrained innovation? Finally are we likely to find this object more in an Art Gallery or in a Tourist Shop?
4. Would you regard these images as appropriated in any way? Since some Hopis already innovated in the selling of objects bearing katsina imagery does it follow that non-Hopis should continue to do likewise? Is imitation a form of flattery which Hopis should recognize and accept or are some or all forms of appropriation truly culturally offensive and justifiably intolerable to them?

NOTE: This exercise is due in class on March 6. Relevant lecture and reading information has been provided in Lectures pertaining to Religion, the Pueblo Southwest, Language, and Activism.

The exercise will be discussed more fully in lecture on February 6.

UCLA's Fowler Museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. It is open W-Sunday from 12-5 and on Th 12-8. Admission is Free. 825-4361.