

Culture Appreciation. Culture Appropriation.

To appreciate is to attempt to hold open hearted space to unlearn - even though we come from a culture that is lost, defensive and naive.

To appreciate culture is to learn - journey - devote oneself to the realm of that reality. Which is unlike our own and thus offers perspective - perception that enables a realization of self. We don't know where we've been standing until we leave and look at it from a different point.

The point is there are many points - that are pointless when attempted to be understood from what we are already rooted in. Skepticism of believing something that may not be "true" is an illusion hiding how deeply we unconsciously experience the world as we are. To let go of reality as we know it and to surrender to an immersion of new logic is a little akin to rebirth. Beginning in death - destruction - a soft ground of curiosity where fear too is rendered unknown.

To appreciate culture is to take the time and energy to sit with the grief. "History" is a story within stories and without stories - Beautiful and painful. Why did patterns repeat until they became traditions? What was the struggle that drove the becoming? An emphasis on origin and ownership of the "originality" is a value rooted in colonialism and capitalism. These communal entities we serve day to day both intentionally and systematically have not and will not always be powerfully underlying forces. But their Empire is here now. Part of sitting with the grief of cultures is the pain of reckoning with our complicity in assimilation and continued apathy.

America is a hodgepodge of things taken under a European colonialist mindset - while ignoring the screams of the many - beginning with the Indigenous earth and her people. Classifying difference as savagery scapegoats and solidifies prestige. White supremacy is pristinely upheld through wilful ignorance. The choice of oblivion and "innocence". It makes sense that we are obsessed with belonging and identity. We are literally built on land we do not know. And our bodies remember the repression and brutality numbing our collective humanity and empathy.

In a society riddled with ridicule and degradation, we have become fragile, maladjusted, isolated. The bully is hurting in all of us. For some reason, the person left more broken is pitied and the flippancy of dismissal is seen as strength - we are afraid and unable to give a fuck. Vulnerability comes at a cost we stake higher and higher. The struggle to responsibly hold emotional and mental (psychological)

wellbeing makes sense. To say "I don't care" is a safe choice that lets it all slide off. It is the choice to give up our choice, our desire, our life.

How foreign, how tender - it must feel to honour ourselves and each other and to breathe in the silence and reverence of a ceremony. To allow ourselves to be led, transformed, shifted. Without feeling as if loss of "control" is an attack. To "heal" is not to indulge in ease but to hold the pain and alchemise it. Ritual is respected in most cultures - there is much to learn, and it is okay if it is harder for us.

To appropriate.

(v) to take, make use of

To use something-someone is to see the earth as interchangeable resource. Upholding our image of independence and sufficiency by ignoring the interconnected web. Distant and industrial it may seem, especially when we ourselves feel like replaceable cogs in a machine - we must remember that everything is alive and we are in relation to each other. When things become transactional - it loses qualitative value and meaning. When things are taken - we lose the pricelessness of being given blessings, and the journey of receiving them.

When we dismiss connection and reciprocation as unnecessary and inefficient, we have prioritized our own usefulness above our presence. A negation of inherent worth - an existence that must be productive - success like product. Not experience.

When lookalike indigenous headdresses are worn in high fashion to capture attention - we have missed a deep opportunity to educate ourselves and each other. Collaboration and mergence with native artists/leaders was not seen as a vitality, or perhaps not known as an option. We always have the chance to seek out people who can comprehensively honour the wisdom of our ancestries and spirit of our doings. And through our creations, destructions, and digestions, we may realise we have become one of those people too.