mentor's introduction

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"Context is meaning," Annie Dillard claimed (1982, P. 177). Her contention is echoed in a Maya woman's caution to Julia Kellman as she began her study of Maya women's weaving in Guatemala. Elena Ixcot urged Ms. Kellman to look not only at the huipiles, but also to consider their origins and uses in the lives of the women who made them--their contexts. In choosing narrative interpretation as the form for her research Ms. Kellman already had selected a methodology that is naturalistic and holistic and that strives to be empathic--to understand the perspectives of those who are studied--so Elena Ixcot's concerns were congruent with the intentions Ms. Kellman brought to her two summer's of field work in Guatemala.

Context is abundantly evident in the narrative from Ms. Kellman's dissertation that follows. Her account manifests that formalism is only one, culturally bound approach to interpreting art objects. With the current emphasis on multi-cultural art, these two understandings which are the foundation for her research are crucial if our studies of art are not to deteriorate into stereotypes or mere curiosity. Context is vital in understanding the meaning of any art, and formalism is a culturally bound approach to art, tied specifically to Western Modern art.

Shortly after presenting this paper, Ms. Kellman successfully defended her dissertation and accepted a faculty appointment at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. Dr. Kellman will return to Guatemala for the summer of 1992 on a research grant to videotape Maya women weavers.

Reference

Dillard, A. (1982). **Living by fiction**. New York: Harper & Row.