

**BETWEEN PURE AND APPLIED RESEARCH:  
EXPERIMENTAL ETHNOGRAPHY IN A  
TRANSCULTURAL TOURIST ART WORLD**

QUETZIL E. CASTAÑEDA

*Open School of Ethnography and Anthropology*

*This article reports on an ethnographic project designed and conducted as an experimental fieldwork practice. The research was a study of the modern Maya artwork of Pisté, Yucatán, that developed in the context of archaeological heritage tourism at the Maya site of Chichén Itzá, México. The article discusses how the research was designed to explore experimental fieldwork as an alternative path between pure and applied research paradigms. The use of art exhibition and installation was developed as a method of studying tourism phenomena in ways that positively contributed to community life. The research included exhibitions of art conducted as fieldwork encounters. Further, the experimental methodologies allowed the research to be designed and conducted so that the historical and ongoing involvement of anthropology in the art tradition was also studied and formulated as part of the object of study. Concepts of research positioning and transculturation are used to elaborate these principles of research design and practice.* Key Words: transculturation, experimental fieldwork, research positioning, heritage tourism, art exhibition, methodologies

**THE PROBLEM: ENTANGLING RESEARCH**

This essay explores the methodological problem of studying transcultural relationships in which the anthropologist and anthropologies form an intrinsic part of the sociocultural phenomena under ethnographic investigation. This issue is explored in relation to an ethnographic study of the modern Maya art and artisans of the community of Pisté, Yucatán, México, and the archaeo-tourist site of neighboring Chichén Itzá that contextualizes and frames the setting of this

---

*NAPA Bulletin 23*, pp. 87–118, ISBN 1-931303-22-3. © 2005 by the American Anthropological Association. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permissions to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Rights and Permissions website, [www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm](http://www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm).

transcultural art world. From 1997 to 1999, an experimental practice of ethnographic fieldwork was developed to study this modern Maya tourist art with this issue in mind. The historical entanglement of diverse forms of anthropology—in art worlds generally and in the world of the Maya specifically—points to certain inadequacies in both “pure research” and “applied research” models: both models tend to obscure certain kinds of transcultural dynamics and processes that inhabit in objects of study such as tourism. The goal of this essay is to discuss the experimental and transcultural ethnography that was developed in order to comment upon this methodological problem.

### **Context and Questions: The Pisté Maya Art World, 1970s to 1999**

In the 1930s, Morris Steggerda conducted ethnographic research in the town of Pisté. He was a member of the multidisciplinary research project studying the Maya at Chichén Itzá, Yucatan, Mexico, that was sponsored by the Carnegie Institution of Washington. In Steggerda’s 1941 monograph, he described the history and culture of the town, noting that there was no production of handicrafts (Steggerda 1941:25; cf. Castañeda 1995, 2001, 2003). Forty years later, in the mid-1970s, the unique Pisté tradition of stone and wood carving was invented by a man, Vicente Chablé, who worked at Chichén Itzá as an employee of the federal anthropology agency (i.e., the INAH or Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia). Inspired by the images of gods and personages depicted in Maya hieroglyphic books and by statuary from archeological sites with which he was either personally familiar or knowledgeable about through archeology books, Chablé began to carve idols in the soft wood of the acacia tree (*chaká*) and in soapstone (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1980s, there were only some twenty carvers, but by 1983 the number of artisans in the Chichén tourist market had escalated to two or three hundred, including “part-timers,” due to the boom in the tourist economy of Cancún. Compelled to invade the archeological zone of Chichén illegally to sell their wares, artisans were politically marginalized and devalued by governmental institutions of art and anthropology (see Figure 2). During the 1980s, the first and second generations of wood carvers primarily produced a cheap and “rudimentary” style of tourist souvenir art that was only sanded after being carved (Figure 3). In the early 1990s, a third generation of artisans emerged who transformed the handicraft into a distinct and established tradition through the addition of forms, figures, modes of paint finishes, and media (Figures 4, 5, and 6). Bolstered by tourists’ seemingly insatiable consumption of the product,



**FIGURE 1.** These two examples of the work of Vicente Chablé were brought to the 1999 *concurso* of Pisté Maya Art by Chablé's surviving sons and wife. The basic *ídolo* form can be carved into two distinct and standardized figures as shown here. On the left is the Corn God, who holds a corn cob between hands and knees, and the right is the Ixchel, or Goddess of Life and Death, who has a child emerging from between the legs. The simple headdress of the Corn God is changed, in the Ixchel figure, into two serpent heads that frame a skull. The figures are carved only in the front, as three-quarter and fully in-the-round carving of idols were only developed in the early 1990s and late 1990s, respectively. These figures are rare as they are carved in stone. In the 1980s actual stone was substituted by a concrete and limestone mix that is sold as stone to tourists (see Notes).

artisans achieved a certain legitimacy and began to participate in regional tourist fairs in Méjico City and in state sponsored handicraft competitions in Mérida. One Pisté artist, Gilberto Yam, was even awarded first place in one of these competitions in 1995.

Starting in 1997, I initiated a three-year research and field school program that included ethnography with artisans as part of an anthropological study of the artwork. Central to this ethnographic research, which focused on production and marketing, was the development of exhibitions in the town of Pisté for local audiences in the summers of 1997, 1998, and 1999. In December 1999, a major grant from the Fideicomiso México-USA (a bi-national granting agency



**FIGURE 2.** This is a typical “invasion” scene from 1995, showing artisans selling their products and two vendors of Popsicles. While food vendors were mobile, most of the handicraft vendors set up their wares alongside paths. During the initial invasion from 1983–1987, all vendors were quite aggressive and were known for frequently intimidating tourists. The vendors and artisans were criticized for their unruly and illegal presence and for disrupting tourists’ “good image” of Chichén, Yucatán, and México. In January 2005, at the time of the publication of this essay, the vendors had re-invaded the archaeological zone due to a conflict with the owners of the Hotel Hacienda Chichén, the Barbachano family, who assert claims of private ownership of parts of the federal zone of cultural patrimony.

comprised of the Mexican National Fund for Culture and the Arts, Bancomer Cultural Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation) allowed us to extend this series of exhibitions to include a showing at a gallery on the campus of a small liberal arts college in the United States. A group of five *Pisté* Maya artists participated in this exhibition of their artwork (Figures 6 and 7).<sup>2</sup> In short, in some 25 years, the artwork had developed based on a improvised opportunity that led from an “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1985) of rudimentary tourist souvenirs to a sophisticated art tradition that includes diverse styles, aesthetics, media, and figures.

There are many different issues raised by this artwork and its history of development. Thus, there are many different ways to formulate ethnographic research on this art, its artisans, and the art world.<sup>3</sup> The research that is discussed in this essay was developed from my prior research. One set of questions concerns the politics and political history of the artisans, artists, and related



**FIGURE 3.** This typical, makeshift display was set up on the side of the road at the entrance to Chichén in 1989. The figures, all unpainted and untreated, include three different mascaron forms leaning against the table. The *ídolos* on the table include Feathered Serpents (left corner), two Corn Gods (left front row), a God of Medicine, the Young Corn God (bust based on a Palenque statue), another Corn God, and another God of Medicine (leaning against a very large Young Corn God). This artwork is a development of the second generation of artisans from the 1980s and demonstrates the beginning of a dramatic expansion of forms and figures that was to occur in the early 1990s with the development of different varnishes and painting styles.

vendors of handicrafts (cf. Castañeda 1998; Himpele and Castañeda 1997; Peraza López, Rejón Patrón, and Piña Loeza 1987). A second set of questions concerns the aesthetic classification, economic markets, cultural-symbolic identity, and mode of production of the art (Castañeda n.d.; Castañeda, Fumero, and Breglia 1999; Armstrong Fumero 2000). A third set of issues centers on how this art tradition emerged within, articulates with, and affects the tourist economy of Yucatán at the levels of micro-region, the regional state society, and the peninsular region of the Cancún-Mérida-Tulum tourist network, as well as the broader history of the community (Morales Valderama et al. 1992; Peraza López and Rejón Patrón 1989; Castañeda 1996:203–231, 2001, 2003).

Within this context, the continued or renewed ethnographic study of the modern Pisté Maya artwork—or *arte pisteño*—and art world would necessarily need to address the methodological problem already mentioned. The art raises this problem in three ways. First, many studies in the anthropology of art have



**FIGURE 4.** In this photo from 1997, the daughters of Victor Tun are shown painting gold trim on *ídolos* in a traditional Maya hut that is used for storage of corn. In this household, the males spend the morning until about 11 a.m. carving pieces while the women finalize the pieces. Later, the pieces are divided up among the extended family, who then go to sell the artwork at their favorite spots in front of different restaurants and hotels in Pisté. The painting or *acabado* (a “finishing” consisting of either a type of varnishing or painting and varnishing) of the wood originates from conversations I had with Hilberto Yam in the summer of 1992, suggesting the possibility of “antiquing” the carvings so as to provide greater allure to tourists. Inspired by my confidence that this would increase the commercial value and attraction for foreign consumers of the pieces, Hilberto experimented with different materials such as gasoline, tar, shoe polish, and paint based in oil, water, and other materials. Until the development of this *acabado*, the carving of wood was completely a man’s job; finishing introduced new steps in the production process that could be assumed by women, specifically sanding, painting, and polishing.

demonstrated the mutual complicity between institutions and practices of art and anthropology in the creation and maintenance of art worlds based on non-Western artworks and objects (e.g., Clifford 1988, 1997; Errington 1998; Mullin 1995; Steiner 1994; Marcus and Myers 1995; Garcia Canclini 1993, 1995).

Second, the historical interdependence between anthropology and tourism is a well-documented complexity that continues to shape and inform the creation of tourist attractions and anthropological practices (e.g., Castañeda 1996; Hervik 1999; Price and Price 1992; Garcia Canclini 1995; Clifford 1997). A statement made by Alfred V. Kidder, the archaeologist in charge of the Carnegie



**FIGURE 5.** On the same day as the photograph above, students from the Field School conducted participant-observation on the processes of art production at Victor Tun's house. Here one student, Fernando Armstrong, is learning to carve with Victor Tun, while Carlos engages in conservation with Victor's son-in-law in the shade of the hut. Meanwhile, Ana Wandless (standing center) and Catherine Deane (far right) are doing photographic and video documentation (respectively) of the work. The hut in Figure 4 above is located five meters behind the photographer of this image.

Institution of Washington (CIW) program of Maya research headquartered at Chichén Itzá (1923–1941), clearly demonstrates this point. Kidder locates the development of tourism not only as the consequence and positive responsibility of archaeology, but as necessary for the continued development of archaeology itself:

If Chichén Itzá can be kept both interesting and beautiful [through archaeological excavation and restoration], it will without question become a Mecca of Travel and incidentally, a most valuable asset for archeology which, like every other science, needs its “show-windows” because public interest must be aroused and eventual public understanding must be achieved if archeology is to go forward. [Kidder 1930:99]

Third, given the above, we might begin to recognize that the emergence of a local artisanry tradition in the face of a burgeoning tourist economy at the local, regional, and national levels is not to be explained as simply a function of locals responding to tourism. Pisté Maya artwork is created within particular contexts that are deeply shaped, structured, and infused by a complex history of anthropological intervention and interaction with anthropologists



**FIGURE 6.** This true bas-relief, titled “Sacrifice to Life,” is carved into a 2-inch-thick cedar board that measures 1 × 1.3 meters. The *chapopote* finishing accentuates the natural color variation of the wood. This piece, which was awarded first place in the 1999 *Concurso* in Pisté under the “tabla” category and showed in the December 1999 exhibition at Lake Forest College, manifests an aesthetic style that resonates with the bas-relief styles found on benches and altars at Chichén, especially in the building complexes archaeologists call Mil Columnas and Mercado, and with styles of the archeological site Tajin, which features extensive use of feathered serpents in its iconography. The content of the piece, although clearly inspired by and borrowing from “ancient Maya” iconography, is, however, original and not a replica of any existing pre-Columbian artwork.

and government officials, as well as a 100-plus-year development of a tourist economy based on archeological ruins and beach–sun–sex attractions. Thus, in terms of the historico-empirical realities of anthropology, art, tourism, and the transcultural art world of Pisté Maya art, scientifically distanced positions of objectivity, neutrality, and value-free approaches are not available from which to analyze, or even to describe, the object of study.

#### **ENTANGLEMENTS: METHODOLOGIES AND OBJECTS OF STUDY**

Anthropological discussion of the mutual entanglement of subject and object is not recent. It is, however, an issue that has been primarily debated



**FIGURE 7.** In 1998 and 1999, the ethnographic research included a workshop with the artisans that was run as a focus group to study transcultural elements of the artwork. On one hand, the workshop was a forum for artisans to learn more about the symbols, iconography, and art history of the ancient Maya art traditions so as to incorporate this knowledge as they saw fit in their own practices. On the other hand, the workshop was a site of ethnographic fieldwork and research on both artisan aesthetics and the lived transcultural dynamics between art worlds and anthropology. The workshop was student directed by Fernando Armstrong Fumero (2000) and is written up as a master's thesis. Shown left to right are Sara Saso (student researcher) and the artists Alvaro Balam and Wilberth Serrano Mex.

by proponents of contrastive paradigms in terms of epistemology and politics. Many have given up on the argument and debate between positivist and humanist philosophies; many have sought to move beyond it in order to constructively devise new modes of analysis that build from the assumption that subject and object are mutually implicated in one another. In the realm of the anthropology of art, for example, Marcus and Myers (1995) suggest the need to develop research methodologies (which would be a kind of "critical ethnography") that are conceptualized from the fact of the historical and reciprocal complicity of the institutions and practices of art and anthropology.

It should be noted, however, that much of the discussion about this complicity, as in Marcus and Myers, presupposes a "pure research" mode or form of ethnography. Anthropological practices of social and cultural critique can



**FIGURE 8.** Before and after the opening of the exhibit at Lake Forest College in 1999, the Maya artists led “tours” for different groups of students from art and anthropology classes, as well as for a private high school from the greater Chicago area. Here, Hilberto Yam explains symbolic and production aspects of an *ídolo* (the God of Medicina, a figure he invented) to an anthropology student during a tour prior to the opening.

be identified as falling under the “pure research” model when they are strongly conditioned by—and aim toward—the scholarly criteria of university or academic knowledge production rather than commercial, communitarian, or governmental agendas of directly effecting social change. On the other side of



**FIGURE 9.** During the exhibit at Lake Forest College, students from the author's course on ethnography sit in the gallery space while listening to an artist (not shown) discussing his artwork in the days after the opening.

science, work that operates within the model or sphere of applied research has often sidestepped or ignored this entangled complicity of subjects and objects of study. This seems to be the case historically; in the present, this approach is just as often a side effect of the constraints established by funding agencies and sponsoring clients. The tendency is for such sponsoring or funding agencies—if not for the anthropologists as well—to consider this question as a theoretical or scholastic issue that has little real-world relevance in terms of the bottom line (see Pels 1999 on ethnographic ethics as caught in a tension between obligations to patrons and responsibility to subjects of research).

Given these tendencies, there is a significant need to interrogate the complicated entanglements of subjects and objects with the explicit aim of reconceiving and reconfiguring the always problematic distinction between pure, basic, theoretical research and applied, practical, policy science. The ethnographic study of Pisté Maya art and artisans provides a welcome occasion for such an exploration.

**EXPERIMENTAL ETHNOGRAPHY**

In 1997, I organized and led the Field School in Experimental Ethnography. In it we initiated a program of research in three areas of study that was conducted over the course of three summer seasons (1997–1999) and one period of fieldwork in the fall of 1999 (Castañeda and Breglia 1997–1998; Logan 1997).<sup>4</sup> Two overarching principles governed the program's conceptual design and organization. First, the field school program combined intensive and long-term field research with a pedagogical agenda of training students in ethnographic fieldwork. In three summer seasons of research, the program trained more than 30 undergraduates and five graduate students and worked in three areas of investigation—one of which, the Ah Dzib Project in Maya Art and Anthropology, is the focus of this essay. Second, the field school program sought both to theorize and to put into practice a mode of ethnography that is called experimental ethnography.

Experimental ethnography in the present context does not refer to the commonly held meaning of the “writely” attempt to experiment with the conventions of ethnographic writing and representation. Instead, the term refers to a process of fieldwork and, more specifically, to a theory and practice of fieldwork that emerges from and works within the dynamic tensions between the articulation of basic and applied research and subject–object dichotomies. The experimentality, or experimental nature, of this ethnography can be defined as an exploration of the methods and practices of fieldwork. Methodologically this experimentation has three aspects. First, there is the detailed re-evaluation of the existing toolkit of ethnographic procedures and reconceptualization of their uses and connections to theoretical concerns shared among sectors of anthropologists. Second, there is the incorporation into ethnographic fieldwork of methods and concepts borrowed from diverse fields of art, such as performance studies, installation art, museology and curation, scenography, street theater, performance art, and theater anthropology. Third, there is the development of innovative combinations of such interdisciplinary techniques to create “new” kinds of dynamics and processes of fieldwork. It must be strongly reiterated that the agenda is not to create “new” methods of fieldwork, but alternative uses and conceptualizations of existing practices so as to create new analyses. This experimental ethnography does not pretend to create new dynamics of fieldwork so much as to create new understandings, perspectives, and uses of the dynamics of fieldwork that have always existed, but have sometimes been obscured within fieldwork.

**THREE PARADIGMS OF RESEARCH: A HEURISTIC  
IDEALIZATION OF IDEAL TYPES**

Conceptually, this experimentation is a different notion than that offered by scientific paradigms. In the present framework it does not refer, as in the positivist and neo-positivist philosophies of science, to a strictly defined methodology or set of procedures and prescriptions aimed at the production, testing, and verification of facts. Following the etymology of the word, the idea here is that of “putting into peril.” In other words, experimentality is an exposing or putting out into the open for questioning, inspection, and exploration the utility of methodological tools; this is a “playing with the possibilities at hand” in such a way that there is a “testing” of methods without the surety of an answer such that there is a risk of “failure”—that is, inadequacy, shortcoming, or limitation in terms of the expectations of the research design. The status of “failure” needs to be discussed more,<sup>5</sup> but for the moment note that this notion of experimentality is precisely what is put into practice with, in, and through fieldwork as this last concept is conceptualized within the humanist paradigm of social science. The distinction here, however, is that whereas the various phenomenological–hermeneutic approaches aim toward understanding and comprehension of the cultural life-worlds of others as pre-given and autonomous, this experimental ethnography assumes that *cultural worlds are created and based on transcultural processes*. Thus, this framing transforms the subject–object binary in a radical way that is not too often theorized in even dialogical-based anthropologies. The notion of experimentality here is different from both (1) the scientific model of experiment that is governed by the teleological objective of the production of new knowledges regarding an object of study and (2) the phenomenological model of experience that is also governed by the goal of producing knowledge in the register of existential, experiential, axiological, and culturo-logical understandings. The reason for this is that experimental ethnography, in this third framework, aims not to produce knowledge *per se*, but to differently deploy the already given understandings and knowledges in ways that have an explicit, direct, and immediate relevancy or significance for the communities in which the fieldwork is conducted.

To clarify: the production of knowledge does occur but does not constitute the ultimate objective or teleology as in the scientific paradigm of accumulating knowledge for its own sake. This point might suggest that this experimental ethnography therefore fits into the paradigm of applied or practical science. However, other differences intervene: for example, the use and valorization

of the experiential and the theoretical in the conceptualization of research designs, which make experimentality a different mode of social science than the “applied” paradigm as well. Although there is affinity to “action research,” experimental ethnography is also different from this methodology. Neither the basic research objective of the accumulation of knowledge (in either mode of neo-positivist or phenomenological science) nor the applied objectives of creating public policy, giving local aid or assistance to communities, or effecting social change and improvement are governing principles.

There is, as noted, a double bricolage of experimentality in this alternative conception of fieldwork: both (1) methodological practices are reconfigured and (2) existing knowledges, understandings, and experiences are recirculated in new modalities that are in turn mediated by the experimentation with fieldwork practices. This double articulation of an experimental bricolage of knowledges through an experimentation with fieldwork methods makes this mode of research both like and unlike existing visions of scientific, humanist, and applied science. It has affinities to all, but crucial counterpoints to each. It would, however, be a mistake to understand these contrastive similarities as a “blurring” of boundaries, as well as an error to think of it as a blurring of the very entities or paradigms whose boundaries are nonetheless porous and malleable. Rather, experimental ethnography is an alternative modality of ethnography that is still emergent and in process of definition. The Field School in Experimental Ethnography was conceived as an ongoing project in furthering the development of this possible mode of ethnography.

#### **THE AH DZIB P'IZTÉ' PROJECT IN MAYA ART AND ANTHROPOLOGY**

The Ah Dzib P'itzé' was developed on the basis of 12 years of ethnographic research conducted from 1985 to 1997 in Pisté (pop. 5,000) and Chichén Itzá.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, this period of ethnographic experience in Pisté roughly coincides with the coming of age of the art tradition among second and third generations of local, Pisté artisans. During this time, however, my prior investigations had objectives that did not take into account the artwork either as an aesthetic-meaningful system of commodities or as a tourist industry. While my previous research had treated the political history of the Pisté artisans and handicraft venders of Chichén Itzá (see Castañeda 1996, 1998; Himpele and Castañeda 1997), the research initiated in 1997 shifted objectives to the cultural politics of

the artwork. Specifically, the project sought to intervene in the political economy of aesthetics with research that emphasized both the cultural dimensions of the art production and the aesthetic elements of the artwork as they articulated actual and possible markets. However, before describing in detail the research agenda and methods, it may help the reader to first have a synthetic summary of the ethnographic context and situation that was studied.

### **The Tourist Market of the Pisté Art World**

The concept of art worlds as developed by Howard Becker (1982; cf. Danto 1964) refers to a configuration of diverse agents, institutions, social relations, and technological forms that contribute necessarily in the making, marketing, distribution, and consumption of works of art. As Marcus and Myers (1995:28, 39 n.) point out, Danto (1964) “originated [the concept of artworld] in his argument that the meaning and value of works are produced in . . . an institutional matrix” (39 n.). Although Becker and Danto offer similar concepts, one nuance is that whereas Danto argues for an “artworld” in the singular, Becker conceptualizes “art worlds” in the plural. This difference is further differentiated typographically by the use of one word and two words by Danto and Becker, respectively.<sup>7</sup> The fuzziness and fluidity of the concept is not a handicap but an advantage, as it helps both to identify the art world of Pisté Maya art and to design research that can trace its different aspects.

The Pisté art world is marked by a complicitous entanglement of business interests, state institutions, tourism agencies, handicraft production, marketing, and anthropological authorities. Without giving further details of this complexity that is described elsewhere (e.g. Castañeda 1996, 2003, 2004), we can synthetically characterize the tourist market (both generally and in this specific case) in terms of how it not only positively enables the art or artisanry production but constrains, delimits, and informs aspects of production, value, and aesthetics. Ten aspects of the Pisté Maya art world can be identified as the baseline for analysis of the conditions in which the project in experimental ethnography was designed to intervene. Although each of the following merits greater elaboration, the focus of this essay only allows a summary listing:

1. State intervention by governmental anthropologies, which both propagates (or “reconverts”) folk or popular handicrafts<sup>8</sup> and asserts legal claim as the only juridically and aesthetically legitimate authority to replicate or copy pre-Columbian art, works to delegitimize any grounds for assertions of Pisté artists as cultural inheritors, renovators,

- and protagonists of an “ancient tradition” based on an organic continuity.
2. Tourist demand for handicrafts tends to be for lower-priced and lower-quality artwork and to eschew items that are high in price compared to the products available in the market.
  3. A tourist preference for kinds of artwork, as well as the sale volume of different figures or styles, are subjectively tracked by artisans and generate a creative conservatism among artisans that is fed by an economic competitiveness.
  4. This conservatism leads to specific forms of copying and reproduction that both constitute the basis of the tradition (and its “continuity”) and raise a set of interesting analytical or theoretical issues centered on the problem of mimesis in art.
  5. Counteracting the conservatism is a creative or innovative spirit among some producers, especially the third generation of artisans, which is fed by an artistic competitiveness or competition in technical and aesthetic mastery of the art of carving.
  6. This artistic spirit not only brings some “artisans” within or in proximity to the domain of the ideological category of “artist,” but is a motivational structure that results in some particularly creative, challenging, innovative, and intricate artwork.
  7. The production of highly elaborate, high-priced pieces is “punished” by the structure of the market and artists must necessarily find an economic balance between the production of high-priced, unique figures and high-volume-sale “stock figures” that require less investment in terms of time, skill, materials, and technical know-how.
  8. This market punishment of the artistic or creative element is, in part, a function of the lack of a system of art writing<sup>9</sup>—or specialist commentary or knowledge—about the art tradition, which would give tourists knowledge through which to make informed aesthetic distinctions.
  9. The exhibitionary structure of market display, based on a “flat” front stage of diverse handicrafts,<sup>10</sup> is a second determining factor that effects a market punishment of the pricing of intricate, elaborate pieces and constrains the aesthetic categorization or meaning of Pisté artwork to “artisanry” rather than “art.”
  10. The market is structured on a three-tiered system of sale by producers, vendors, and handicraft stores that does not include a brokerage of the artwork by metropolitan curators, critics, collectors, dealers, and other agents—the existence of which

would allow alternatives to the market punishment of high-end artwork.

In summary, the Pisté Maya art world emerged from, and has remained within, the handicraft markets of Chichén and nearby tourist attractions such as Mérida and the Cancún region. In this market it sells as local “folk” or “indigenous” art to tourists, whether Mexican or foreign, since it is embedded within the context of the diverse national, regional, indigenous, folk, and popular arts of México. Its authenticity resides therefore in its physical or visual market relation to other contemporary crafts, even if it is dynamically inspired by and draws from pre-Columbian traditions. These conditions combine to create a structure of meaning in which the Pisté Maya artwork can only have significance as a contemporary art form defined within the domains of handicrafts and tourism markets. The value of the artwork is therefore constituted—that is, both enabled and contained—as tourism handicrafts.

The absence of one factor is crucial in effecting this closure on the possibilities of value: there is, as of yet, neither a production of knowledge about it in the forms of art criticism, ethnographic representation, or museum/gallery exhibition of the art, on the one hand, nor the development of a patronage and “discovery” of the art by wealthy patrons, collectors, galleries, or other agents of metropolitan capitalism. These two elements are mutually interdependent, since these agents write the commentaries about and critiques of the artwork and circulate it in new exhibitionary networks of museums, galleries, and markets within Western art worlds but do so primarily on the basis of a prior history of insertion of the art into the circuits of critique, commentary, and exhibition. Thus, from the perspective of an “applied anthropology,” the task is clearly one of creating, from a blank slate, a system of art writing that would trigger or initiate this opening into new circuits of exhibition and commentary. How can ethnographic research conceived as applied anthropology work to stimulate the “discovery” of an art tradition by transnational art critics, patrons, and collectors? Note here that the concept of art writing includes within it not only the idea of verbal and published commentary and critique by art critics, anthropologists, dealers, collectors, et cetera, but the art’s curation in diverse settings of exhibition. Indeed, the curation of the artwork in gallery and museum space is a fundamental mode of commentary that is both the result and the production of perception, reception, and valorization of art.

### **The Research Agenda and Methodology of the Ah Dzib P'izté' Experimental Ethnography Project**

The foregoing analysis or “pre-understanding” of the political economy of aesthetics provided the foundation for an experimental ethnography. This understanding of the transcultural art world of Pisté and its tourist markets suggested a strategy of fieldwork based in the methodological principle of installation. This strategy would allow us to center the investigation on problems of aesthetics and value as articulated through display, staging, and exhibition. With the goal of contributing to the opening up of the conditions of production and marketing in which Pisté Maya art and artisan exists, the Ah Dzib P'izté' Project in Maya Art and Anthropology had five objectives. The agenda below was formulated through a consideration of the intersection of (1) the issues of the empirical and conceptual entanglements of subjects and objects of study (as well as of anthropology and tourism, anthropology and art), (2) the objective of developing a theory and practice of experimental fieldwork, and (3) the transcultural reality of the life worlds and art worlds of Pisté and Chichén Itzá.

1. Explore—that is, conceive and operationalize—experimental practices of ethnographic fieldwork that are linked to quotidian processes of cultural invention, intercultural exchange, and transcultural interaction.
2. Create and organize exhibitions of the contemporary Maya art of Pisté in the community of Pisté for audiences that are formed by the local community, regional society, and international tourism, as well as international exhibitions for broader transnational publics.
3. Realize different publication projects that include academic and popular books, scientific journal articles, and ethnographic art catalogues that target tourist and popular readerships.
4. Contribute to the opening of the conditions of production and commercialization of the aesthetic work of producing Pisté Maya art and artisanry through the diverse processes of experimental ethnography, which include fieldwork, exhibition, installations, and print and video publications.
5. Theorize and further develop in actual practice new uses of ethnographic fieldwork in the creation and fomentation of communicative links and networks between anthropology and the cultural communities in which it operates.

Notable in this research agenda is the recognition of open-ended processes and specific, particular strategies by which to address and intervene in them. In turn, the actualization of fieldwork, aiming toward these objectives, was designed out of “standard” ethnographic techniques and procedures, such as interviewing, observation, participation, and documentation, in conjunction with procedures and methods that were borrowed from diverse fields of art, such as installation art, performance art, museology, and curation, as well as theater anthropology. Specifically, the Ah Dzib P’itzé’ Project was based in fieldwork that used interviewing; participant-observation, both “alone” and with multimedia documentation; modified focus group workshops; the staging of sites of fieldwork (or fieldwork interaction–exchange); the exhibition and curation of art as sites of fieldwork; expanded documentation of the collaborative fieldwork processes; and research workshops to collectively design and operationalize agendas. The remainder of this ethnographic report of fieldwork focuses on processes of installation and exhibition.

The ideas of installation and exhibition are quite closely related. In the context of the development of experimental ethnography, the concept of “installation” was developed as a methodological principle and strategy in a way different than that of “exhibition.” Whereas “exhibition” is used in the common-sense meaning of “display,” the notion of ethnographic installation refers to other processes. Specifically, “installation” was used as a strategy of proactively intervening in space to create or stage an environment in which to conduct ethnographic fieldwork. Staging in fieldwork can range from something as invisible as the rearrangement of social relations necessary to conduct an interview or a conversation with an “informant” to something as spectacular as an art exhibition. The diagnostic element of ethnographic installations is that they are strategically constructed and staged spaces in which to realize fieldwork activities.

***The Art of Staging Fieldwork: Installation*** In the fourth week of an eight-week season in 1997, a core team of three student researchers, the two field school directors, and the graduate student assistant instructor<sup>11</sup> was assembled and established an agenda: to organize and install an exhibition of Pisté Maya art in the town center. The first step, after getting approval from community authorities, was to make an invitational call and campaign to all artisans asking for their participation. Having established logistical issues regarding the exhibit, students began to conduct participant-observation of the art world

(production and sale) as they went to various locations to invite artisans to participate. Student researchers were directed to spend days “hanging out” with different groups of artisans and to move from group to group, making acquaintances if not friends and explaining the project agenda as well as the logistics of the exhibition. Artisans were obliged to register on a day set well in advance of the exhibition date. For registration, the research team prepared a structured questionnaire which was administered in an area of the town hall by the team. Questions concerned (1) the social aspects of production, (2) the typical kinds of artwork produced by the artisan, (3) the artisan’s sources and mode of learning the art, and (4) the projected piece or pieces the artisan would produce for the exhibition. Artisans came in groups and asked questions, often with a substantial amount of hesitancy and perhaps even unspoken doubt. Although almost forty artisans initially registered, many artisans approached students to register late. However, in the final count, only 19 participated.

The attempt to organize an exhibition was an experimental process in several ways. On the one hand, Pisté Maya art had been an “invented tradition,” in that the community of Pisté itself recognized that the artwork had no authentic continuity or connection to the ancient traditions that inspired it and that it imitated, regional “folk” or Maya traditions of carving wood, or to the history of the community. Further, the artisans themselves were of questionable character, not only for their history of illegal invasions of the archeological zone to sell handicrafts but for their general tendency—as males from the lowest socioeconomic sectors of society—to publicly consume their substantial profits in beer and liquor. The intensely political history of the artisans included several episodes of violence—not only between their groups but as a whole with police, military, anthropological authorities, state agencies, private capitalists, and tour guides. In short, there had never been any kind of organized effort oriented toward the “collective good” that was not in fact simply an elaborate, self-interested scheme (on the part of one or more vendors or artisans) or an attempt to liquidate the artisans as a commercial force (on the part of authorities or handicraft store owners).

An overwhelming culture of conspiracy theory, skepticism, self-interest, double crossing, deceit, and rejection of communal action has prevailed throughout México in the last decades of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and had entrenched itself in Pisté. In this context, not only was the project of an art exhibit exceedingly suspect, but my motivations and objectives as project director were open to extremely jaded interpretations for a

variety of reasons (see Castañeda 1996:259–297, 1998; Himpele and Castañeda 1997).<sup>12</sup>

On a more practical level, the structure of the exhibition itself was logically antagonistic to the modus operandi of all artists. In order to effectively design and construct an exhibition space, one needs to have collected the pieces sufficiently in advance. The tourist demand for this artwork is so high, however, that artisans usually sell what they produce within a few days. There is no stockpiling or warehousing of pieces by producers, only by buyers or vendors. Further, the domestic economy of many of the artisans is such that what is produced today must be sold today in order to have any income whatsoever. It is true that everyone uses this ideological line as a way to protest one's poverty and humility, not simply as a bargaining chip with tourists or dissimulation for ethnographers, but as a way of safeguarding against neighbors who might get *envidia* (i.e., a case of vengeful, harm-causing jealousy). Thus, the decision to hold an exhibit—an activity that had never before been attempted, much less accomplished—was perilous for the simple fact that it could have been totally and completely rejected by all those concerned. Thus, the fact that nearly fifty artisans registered (out of some two hundred) and that nearly twenty actually participated is a successful achievement in and of itself for an event that had never previously been attempted.

It was mostly achieved, however, through the promise that virtually all the pieces would be purchased by the field school or by individual researchers. Further, it was made known that “good” prices would be paid as part of a stimulus to improve quality and open up pricing. While such an objective was only viable as part of a long-term process, the most immediate and tangible success of the exhibition was a function of its actualization. Although the exhibition itself was rudimentary, makeshift, and handicapped by the mid-August rains prior to hurricane season, it was a successful, well-attended cultural event that received rare newspaper publicity. Despite inadequacies in several registers, for the broader Pisté community it opened up an awareness of the artwork as aesthetic objects as well as an understanding of the artisans as truly skilled craftsmen and legitimate artisans, if not exactly artists.

One example of this shift in local perception and reception of the artwork and artisans is an interaction that occurred on the last night of the exhibition in 1997. Ruben, a tour guide at Chichén since the early 1980s, during the period of exacerbated antagonism toward the artisans (Castañeda 1998), had entered the exhibit space, and I gave him a tour so he could inspect the artwork. Standing within hearing distance of a group of three artists who were evaluating the

artwork in front of them, he marveled at a particular piece and commented in surprise about the exceptional talents of its creator. Ruben had never seen work of this aesthetic and technical quality, and his loud, surprised response told me and others that the *chavo* (roughly “dude”) who had made this piece should be *orgulloso* (proud); that indeed this was not just artisanry but art, high art. Furthermore, Ruben said that he, too, was *orgulloso* to be of Pisté because this artwork, which had been created in Pisté, had finally developed into something so beautiful and complex. He was surprised and proud of Pisté, its artists, and its tradition of Maya art. The artist who had carved the piece and two of his friends, who were standing nearby, pretended to not hear, but the comment reverberated in the room.

If the 1997 exhibit indeed contributed to a shift in the popular understanding of and attitudes toward the aesthetic merits of the local art tradition, it did not amount to a revolution in pricing and valorization. This was just an initial impulse that had the added benefit of establishing a precedent for the 1998 field season and exhibition. A focus group workshop on Maya iconography, hieroglyphs, and art styles was created as one forum in which artists could create a piece specifically for the art exhibition. However, due to real-life constraints, skepticism, and other reasons, only nine artists responded to the invitation to participate in this weekly forum led by one of the student researchers. Staged as a space or site of fieldwork, the workshop featured a leader (a student researcher) who exchanged knowledge about ancient traditions as a means through which to investigate questions of the artisans’ aesthetics, sources, techniques, and culture of work, all within a problematic of transcultural exchange. Although participation in the workshop was explicitly not a condition of participation in the exhibition, the workshop dynamic was apparently a factor that may have precluded other artisans from registering for and participating in the exhibit. Another reason for the low turnout, at least according to everyday talk as reported by student researchers, was our dissemination of the fact that the field school could not guarantee the purchase of the participating artwork.

In addressing low turnout, it was determined that the researchers would scope out artwork at Chichén and other venues to request “loans” for the exhibition. Interestingly enough, this circumstance may have been helpful in counteracting a rumor that had spread to the effect that the exhibition was simply a means by which to procure artwork that would be sold in the United States for exponentially increased prices and, of course, private gain. It had the added benefit of allowing for pieces to be collected sufficiently

in advance to be able to design the exhibition and display of objects. While the conceptualization and design of this exhibit, which sought to put into play a style of curation borrowed from conceptualism or conceptual art (c.f. Kosuth et al. 1991; Foster 1995), are important elements to discuss, the space of this essay permits only two further points. First, the exhibition again served an important pedagogical function in training students in fieldwork and in the anthropology of art; it also allowed the research team to explore concepts of experimental ethnography. Second, the 1998 exhibition, although based on limited artisan participation, continued to stimulate community engagement and, for all appearances and based on local gossip, positively shifted attitudes towards the field school agenda as well as the artisans of Pisté.

**The Fieldwork of Staging Art: Exhibition** In this context, it was critical for the 1999 season to build on the successes of the previous years but also to develop a more successful strategy for artisan participation. Two additional factors enabled this to happen: First, major funding from the U.S.-México Grant provided the necessary resources for a more ambitious exhibition, and, second, a number of community groups—primarily the town authorities and representatives of the Chichén employees of the INAH—sought to collaborate actively in the organization of the ethnographic installations. It was decided that the exhibition would be structured as a *concurso* or competition, with prize monies solicited from local businesses. The *concurso* proved to be an excellent decision, not only because this format of exhibition was culturally familiar and intelligible to artisans and the broader community alike—unlike the exhibition of artwork for its own sake—but also because it was sociologically congruent to local marketing practices. Thus, while the prior attempts to create a style of “gallery exhibition” in Pisté simply did not fit the political and economic realities of the Pisté art world, a *concurso* format was logical and compelling within local cultural expectations and experience. It resolved the problem of the artisans’ need for an economic incentive for which to work and functioned as the mechanism by which to ensure their participation. An additional carrot was the promise that five artisans and their prizewinning artwork would travel to the United States for a late fall exhibit. Not only did 50 artists register and comply with their commitments, but a number of artists who had traveled from cities an hour away had to be turned away on the morning of opening day.

Work was nonstop in the organization of collaborators who greatly assisted in the preparation. Arrangements were made with local businesses for prize

monies and materials. The local Coca-Cola distributor donated beverages for sale as well as a 30-by-30-meter tent for an outside exhibit. Representatives from local groups—such as tour guides and businesses—as well as from regional institutions—such as Alfredo Barrera Rubio, then director of the state office of the INAH, and a curator from the state-funded museum of culture and arts—were asked to be judges. A local restaurant owner and dance professional organized the opening entertainment with live traditional music and a regional dance performance by a troupe of children that he directs.

In short, the three-night event was shaped into a form that abided by cultural norms and expectations. It was a success in the manner of non-political and non-religious social events that enact and substantiate “community.” Success was dependent upon the articulation of the field school’s goal of exhibiting the artwork as art with local conceptions of an exhibition as a handicraft competition. In an approximation of gallery style exhibition, the summer 1999 exhibit used pedestals and wall sections on which to place or hang artwork, as well as an elaborate system of lighting. This reterritorialization of the artwork—displacing it from the tourist market and reframing it as art—was the basis for a transformation of its local valorization. Yet the whole exhibit was culturally framed as a meaningful and relevant cultural event with music, prizes, and collaboration. Along these registers of collective belonging and identity, the event effervesced with renewed community spirit, self-appreciation, and good will amongst the diverse, and often antagonistic, sectors of Pisté. There is, however, a great risk in this type of format: If it were to become a routine, annual function, this form of event could ultimately re-inscribe the artwork as *artisanry* and not as *art*.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **Experimental Ethnography in Pisté: Between and Betwixt**

With the goal of positively affecting a modification in the valorization of the Pisté art, the ethnography developed a twofold strategy. First, it was necessary to extract the artwork from the tourist handicraft context from which it had emerged and from which its value was determined. Second, the reinstallation of the artwork into different contexts would contribute to a shift in the assignation of value as well as a change in its perception or reception, from ethnographic artisanry to aesthetic art. The key phrase is “could contribute,” for the process of this change is a long and difficult road, as Mullin (1995) has analyzed in the transformation of Southwest Indian artwork from handicrafts to ethnographic

curios to an art and aesthetic imbued with national values. In this case, it took the combined support of anthropological institutions whose sponsorship of competitions cultivated cults of the individual artist and wealthy art connoisseurs. Thus, the complicated shift in perception or reception is a triple-headed objective. Not only must the artisans themselves alter their understanding, but so must the social community in which the artisans or artists are embedded, in order that a whole series of other consumers (e.g., tourists, art critics, anthropological authorities, curators, state agencies, collectors, dealers, etc.) will be compelled to re-evaluate the artwork according to a different marketing structure of value.

Thus, in the project of experimental ethnography, fieldwork not only became the strategic means of establishing an art writing in which Pisté Maya art could circulate, but fieldwork itself was yet a third mode of art writing that entailed particular kinds of commentary, transcultural engagements, communication, and interaction. The question arises as to how we might measure the success of the research. In short, there is no adequate non-subjective way to gauge the success of the project in strict scientific terms. The immediate benefits or “social change” are intangible and immaterial—that is, they exist in the diverse form of attitudes, perceptions, ideas, and sentiments in Pisté. More concrete and quantitatively measurable manifestations may occur in the long run. Nonetheless, an important precedent of exhibiting and writing about the artwork in new ways was established and experienced in Pisté. Regarding the value, success, or failure of the ethnography as a social science betwixt and between pure or basic and applied or practicing anthropology, this question also requires time for answers to develop. In part, time is needed to bring the results and processes of this research into publication, and in part it requires the commentary and critique of other anthropologists. Nonetheless, the Ah Dzib P'izte' Project, as part of the Field School in Experimental Ethnography, contributed to the broader agenda of actualizing alternative practices of ethnographic fieldwork with the aim of creating and fomenting new communicative links and transcultural exchange between anthropology and the cultural communities in which it operates.<sup>13</sup>

### **Experimental Fieldwork: Between and Betwixt Pure and Applied Paradigms**

Experimental ethnography as elaborated in this study of the Pisté Maya art world is a mode of fieldwork in which given, prior, and assumed knowledges are used and recirculated in fieldwork activities, dynamics, and practices. This

recirculation of knowledge has the goals of actualizing an ethnographic process that has both (1) relevance to and for the communities in which research is conducted and (2) experiments with the very practices of fieldwork itself with the aim of theorizing and reconfiguring alternative forms of ethnography. The aim of such a reconfiguration is not, however, to displace either pure or applied research paradigms, but rather to contribute to the pluralization of ways of doing ethnography.

On the one hand, experimental ethnography has an affinity to applied anthropology. Research in the applied model tends to be governed by tangible objectives that can be generalized as having three forms: (1) effecting social change in a traditional community's relationship to modernity or modernization; (2) producing knowledge for use in the creation of governmental policy or to inform the political action of non-state collectivities; and (3) aiding communities or collectivities in rediscovering and revitalizing one or more aspects of their cultural traditions in the face of globalization, Western hegemony, or national modernities. Experimental ethnography locates the value of the anthropological intervention, however, not in the teleology of these objectified results (i.e., social change, policy or political action, or cultural revitalization) but in the process of fieldwork itself. The goal is not the application of knowledge produced in and through fieldwork, but the recirculation of knowledges that are already there in the sites of fieldwork. In this different model, the value of research lies with and in the actual dynamics of fieldwork; this is the primary locus where the real-world relevance and significance of this form of ethnography is to be measured, evaluated, and appreciated. To be sure, there are forms of applied anthropology that place primary value on the very dynamics of fieldwork itself and, thus, prioritize the intervention of research in the sites of fieldwork as a kind of *in-situ* problem solving. But again, the difference here between applied and experimental ethnography is the prior conception of a problem to solve in the first case. In this regard, experimental ethnography is less like applied anthropology and much more like the phenomenologically oriented ethnographies of certain dialogical approaches, theater anthropology, and strands of feminist scholarship.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, experimental ethnography has an affinity to pure or basic models of research because of its positive view of, exploration of, and contribution to theory and theoretical issues. Yet, the primacy given to the on-the-ground relevance of fieldwork in its very conduct and processes makes this quite clearly distinct from positivist and neo-positivist social sciences. "Knowledge" is not being "tested" *for truth* to produce facts by a determined structure

of fieldwork procedures that processes this knowledge or these facts (by verifying, accumulating, and stockpiling). It is also distinct from other modes of ethnography inspired by theoretical traditions of sociocultural critique (e.g., Marxisms, feminisms, post-structuralisms, postcolonial discourse, etc.). The critical intervention of ethnography in those traditions ultimately targets an academic or popular audience quite displaced from the actual sites of fieldwork.

In this vision of experimental ethnography, fieldwork practices are being “recombined” *to explore their utility* in the recirculation of given knowledge in a relevant manner by the very activity of the exploratory bricolage. This exploration for utility is where a different notion of experimentality enters into play. Based on the etymological meaning of “putting out” (exo-) into danger or risk (peril), fieldwork itself is at peril and is a perilous locus of “failure” (e.g., shortcomings, inadequacies, partial results, etc.). Since, the subject and criteria of “failure” in all kinds of ethnography is a huge topic that must be reserved for a different occasion, note here that the experimentality of this emergent kind of ethnography is a kind of bricolage of fieldwork in which concepts, methods, techniques from various fields of art (e.g., scenography, museology, art installation, and performance arts) are recombined with the inherited methodologies of anthropology in both its pure or research and applied forms.

#### NOTES

1. The source of the soapstone was exhausted in the early 1980s. Pistéartisans then began to mix limestone, cement powder, and paint and to shape the mixture into blocks of different sizes that are then “carved” with a technique that is more accurately described as scraping. Since the artworks formed from this mix are sold as “stone” carvings, the field school labeled this medium *piedra pisteña* or Pistéstone. With the introduction of latex molding in the mid–1990s, artisans began to copy diverse handicrafts—not only locally made wood carvings but also foreign ceramic, stone, and wood handicrafts produced in other parts of México and Yucatán. Economically speaking, this copying is expedient as it cuts the cost of purchasing handicrafts from itinerant wholesalers and allows one to sell the “same” product, but in Pistéstone. Curiously, despite the fact that this medium is used for replica reproduction, it is nonetheless not marked by conservatism, as noted below. Instead, Pistéstone is a medium in which there is significant innovation and experimentation with designs, motifs, forms, and figures.

2. The Field School in Experimental Ethnography was funded by student support in the summers of 1997, 1998, and 1999. Support was also provided by a grant from the University of Houston in 1997. Major funding of the research program with the artists in the summer of 1999 in Pisté, and the cost of the artists’ travel to participate in the December 1999 U.S. exhibition, was funded by a Cultural Studies Grant from the Fideicomiso U.S.-México, a funding agency sponsored by FONCA (México’s national Fund for Culture and the Arts), Fundación Cultural Bancomer, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Costs of the exhibition and catalog (Castañeda, Armstrong Fumero, and Breglia 1999) were funded by support from Lake Forest College. These funding sources are gratefully acknowledged.

3. The choice of words to refer to this tradition, its objects, their producers, and the work of producing the objects from this tradition has political, aesthetic, cultural, and economic ramifications. Thus, where the analysis focuses on questions of how to categorize the work, the term "artwork" is used as a neutral term between "artisanry" and "art," "artisan" and "artist." "Artwork" has the added benefit of referencing one or more of the products, producers, and processes of production.

4. The three projects are The Chilam Balam Project in Memory and History, SELT or The School in Experimental Language Training, and the Ah Dzib P'itzé' Project in Maya Art and Anthropology.

5. "Failure" or "inadequacy" is difficult to measure and gauge if the criteria for failure are in terms of the kind, quality, and amount of engagement and interaction that one seeks. In the conduct of fieldwork, if a procedure is inadequate, then a shift in procedures or objectives is quickly instituted. If this is not possible, then, after the fact of fieldwork, the writing of ethnography can convert all "failures" into processes that reveal significant dynamics, understandings, or experiences that provide compelling moral, cultural, practical, pedagogical, political, or other lessons that were learned by the ethnographer and are to be learned by the reader of the ethnography.

6. My first visit to Chichén Itzáwas at the age of eleven in 1972, when my parents made the overland drive to visit relatives and ruins in México and Guatemala. A picture my father took of my mother and me posed at the edge of the Sacred Cenote inspired me to return to this site for master's research in 1984 and 1985, for dissertation research from 1987 through 1989 and in 1991, and for postdoctoral research in the summer of 1992 and each summer between 1995 and 2001. Having already witnessed the phenomenon in 1988 and 1989, my pilgrimages to the spring equinoxes at Chichén began in 1993 and include return visits in 1995 and 1997 with Jeff Himpelé (see Himpelé and Castañeda 1997) and in 2001 and 2003. In 2002–2003 I returned to Yucatán to live in Mérida while teaching and conducting research with support from a Fulbright grant.

7. The related work of Bourdieu (1993) on "fields" and art is not explicitly used in this essay, but informs the general project and is discussed elsewhere (Castañeda n.d.).

8. See Canclini (1993, 1995) and Castañeda (1996, 1998, n.d.; Himpelé and Castañeda 1997) regarding how the Pistétradition ambiguously fits into Canclini's analysis.

9. The concept of art writing is introduced by Carrier (1987) and discussed in relation to anthropology and ethnographic writing by Marcus and Myer (1995).

10. By way of this phrase, a contrast is made between the exhibitionary styles of Mexican handcrafts generally and those that are constructed with either "deep" displays or "back" regions or both, in which the same tourist art is exhibited and sold but with an aura of greater authenticity, value, antiquity, meaning, et cetera. Steiner's (1995) discussion of the African tourist art markets, which builds on MacCannell's borrowing of Goffman's concept of front and back stages, is an exemplary contrast.

11. The students working on the Ah Dzib P'itzé' Project in 1997 were Carlos Arana, Fernando Armstrong Fumero, and Catherine Deane. Joy Logan, associate professor of Spanish at the University of Hawai'i-Manoa, was the field school co-director, and Edith Flores, a master's student in Spanish from the University of Houston, was the assistant instructor. Laurie Kovacovic, whose area was the ethnographic study of transcultural dynamics in the teaching of English as a second language to Pistéchildren and youth, provided fundamental assistance to the research with the Maya artists in both 1997 and 1998. Jennifer White and Ana Wandless, members of the research team on the history of Pisté, also contributed significantly to the art project in 1997 and, in the case of Wandless, in 1998. Armstrong Fumero returned to the field school in 1998 and 1999 and assumed the role of student director of the Ah Dzib P'itzé' project. Sarah Saso, James Todd, and Hutan Hejazi-Martinez participated in 1999. Lisa Breglia, doctoral student in anthropology at Rice, was the assistant director of the field school in 1998 and 1999 and directly contributed to the art project, especially in terms of the joint installations of PistéMaya art and the Chilam Balam Project in Memory and History in 1998 and 1999 (see Breglia 2003). In Houston, sustained dialogues with Abdel Hernández have been crucial to think through all aspects of experimental ethnography. Hernández, Breglia, and Armstrong Fumero actively participated in the Lake Forest installation. All of these persons and others who participated in the field school process are deeply appreciated for their contributions.

12. The director, in the words of one local, is "folkloric" (Himpele and Castañeda 1997). This attribution derives from a long and complicated history of involvement in the community and is especially shaped by the friendships the director had established during his very public participation in the sociopolitical movement of 1989–1991 and its subsequent breakup, which included a return to old and new antagonisms between the once-allied factions of the town leadership (Castañeda 1996, 1998, 2003).

13. A note of acknowledgement: There are a great number of persons who directly and indirectly contributed to the process of the Ah Dzib P'itzé Project. I would like to gratefully thank all of the artists, artisans, authorities, and collaborators from Pisté and the community, especially Gilberto Yam, Rebecca Pat, and Victor Olalde. The second debt is to all of the field school participants, especially Lisa Breglia, Joy Logan, Laurie Kovacovic, Edith Flores, Fernando Armstrong, Ana Wandless, Jenny White, Hutan Hejazi-Martinez, Juan Castillo Cocom, and James Todd, without whom this would not be. Numerous colleagues, who have aided this project by providing me with the opportunity to present this material for dialogue and debate at their universities, are thanked for their generosity: Joanne Rappaport, Mark Leone, Ted Fischer, Luis Vivanco, Ruth Behar, Fernando Coronil, Bruce Mannheim, Mary Weismantel, Brooke Thomas, Oriol Pi-Sunyer, Lynnette Leidy, Ann Annagnost, Celia Lowe, Kathy O'Connor, Marvin Cohodas, Anne Pyburn, Rick Wilk, Claudio Lomnitz, Tom Cummings, Michelle Day, Geoff White, Ming-Boa Yue, Alfredo Barrera Rubio, Steve Mintz, Steve Tyler, and George Marcus. Funding agencies, especially the Fideicomiso U.S.-México are thanked and listed in Note 2. Chris Reed and Cynthia Robin are deeply appreciated for their critical aide and heartfelt companionship in the Lake Forest process. A special thanks to Tim Wallace for his friendship and support, as well as the invitation to collaborate with him on this and other projects.

14. See Mannheim and Tedlock 1995 and Tedlock 1983, 1995 for dialogical anthropology; Schechner 1985, 1988; Turner 1982, 1988; and Barba 1991, 1995 for theater anthropology; and Behar 1993, 1996; Stewart 1996; and Visweswaran 1997 for the feminist scholarship on ethnography. Significantly, the emphasis on process rather than product is also a part of certain movements in art, such as in action painting, conceptualism, and performance art or art installation (see Castañeda *in press*).

#### REFERENCES CITED

- Armstrong Fumero, Fernando  
2000 *Making Art in Pisté: Art and Experimental Ethnography in a Yucatec Maya Community*. Master's thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania.
- Barba, Eugenio  
1991 *Dictionary of Theater Anthropology*. London: Routledge.  
1995 *The Paper Canoe*. London: Routledge.
- Becker, Howard S.  
1982 *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Behar, Ruth  
1993 *Translated Woman*. Boston: Beacon Press.  
1996 *Vulnerable Observer*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre  
1993 *The Field of Cultural Production*. New York: Columbia.
- Breglia, Lisa Catherine  
2003 *Docile Descendants and Illegitimate Heirs: Privatization of Cultural Patrimony in Mexico*. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Rice University.

- Carrier, David  
1987 *Artwriting*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Castañeda, Quetzil E.  
1995 The Progress That Chose A Village. *Critique of Anthropology* 15(2):115–147.  
1996 In the Museum of Maya Culture: Touring Chichén Itzá. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.  
1998 On the Correct Training of Indios at the Handicraft Market at Chichén Itzá. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 2(2):106–143.  
2001 Approaching Ruins: A Photo-Ethnographic Essay on the Busy Intersections of Chichén Itzá. *Visual Anthropology Review* 16(2):43–70.  
2003 New and Old Social Movements: Measuring Pisté, From the Mouth of the Well to the 107th Municipio of Yucatán. *Ethnohistory* 50(4):611–641.  
2004 Art-Writing in the Modern Maya Art-World of Chichén Itzá: Transcultural Ethnography and Experimental Fieldwork. *American Ethnologist* 30(1):21–42.  
N.d. The Authentic, the Hybrid, and The Unpopular: Alternative Modernities in the Maya Art World of Chichén Itzá. *In* Popularizing the Public and Publicizing the Popular in Latin America. J. Himpele and R. Albro, eds. Unpublished MS.
- Castañeda, Quetzil E., Fernando Armstrong Fumero, and Lisa Breglia  
1999 Ah Dzib P'itzé: Modern Maya Art in Ancient Tradition. Exhibition Catalog. Lake Forest, IL: Lake Forest College.
- Castañeda, Quetzil E., and Lisa C. Breglia, eds.  
1997–1998 Monographs of the Field School in Experimental Ethnography. Unpublished manuscripts, The Open School of Ethnography and Anthropology (Pisté, Yucatán, México).
- Clifford, James  
1988 The Predicament of Culture. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.  
1997 Routes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Danto, Arthur  
1964 The Artworld. *Journal of Philosophy* 61:571–184.
- Errington, Shelly  
1998 Death of Authentic Primitive Art. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Foster, Hal  
1995 The Artist as Ethnographer? *In* Traffic in Culture. G. Marcus and F. Myers, eds. Pp. 302–309. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Garcia Canclini, Nestor  
1993 Transforming Modernity. Austin: University of Texas Press.  
1995 Hybrid Cultures. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Greenblatt, Stephen  
1992 Resonance and Wonder. *In* Exhibiting Cultures. I. Karp and S. D. Lavine, eds. Pp. 42–56. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution.
- Hervik, Peter  
1998 The Mysterious Maya of National Geographic. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 4(1):166–197.
- Himpele, Jeffrey, and Quetzil E. Castañeda  
1997 Incidents of Travel in Chichén Itzá. Watertown, MA: Documentary Educational Resources.

- Hobsbawm, E., and T. Ranger.  
1985 *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kidder, Alfred V.  
1930 *Division of Historical Research. Yearbook #29 (1929–1930)*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Kosuth, Joseph  
1991 *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Logan, Joy  
N.d. Transforming the Ethnography within Educational Pedagogy into Experimental Ethnography. *In Monographs of the Field School in Experimental Ethnography (1997)*. Q. Castañeda and L. Breglia, eds. Unpublished MS.
- Mannheim, Bruce, and Dennis Tedlock  
1995 Introduction. *In The Dialogical Emergence of Culture*. D. Tedlock and B. Mannheim, eds. Pp. 1–32. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Marcus, George E., and Fred R. Myers  
1995 The Traffic in Art and Culture: An Introduction. *In Traffic in Culture*. G. E. Marcus and F. R. Myers, eds. Pp. 1–54. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Morales Valderrama, Carmen, Ella F. Quintal Avilés, María Elena Peraza López, and Lourdes Rejón Patrón  
1992 Las artesanías del oriente de Yucatán: su proceso de cambio a partir de los setenta. *In Memoria del Primer Congreso Internacional de Mayistas*. Pp. 316–337. UNAM: México DF.
- Mullin, Molly H  
1995 The Patronage of Difference: Making Indian Art “Art, Not Ethnology.” *In Traffic in Culture*. G. E. Marcus and F. R. Myers, eds. Pp. 166–200. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Peraza López, María Elena, and Lourdes Rejón Patrón  
1989 El Comercio de Artesanías en Chichén Itzá y Algunos Efectos del Turismo en la Región. Mérida: Centro Regional de Yucatán, INAH.
- Peraza López, María Elena, Lourdes Rejón Patrón, and Julio Piña Loeza  
1987 La invasión de vendedores de artesanías en la zona arqueológica de Chichén Itzá, Yucatán. *Boletín de Ecología* 14:17–30.
- Pick, James B., W. James Hetrick, Edgar W. Butler, and Katsumi Kunakoshi  
In press Tourism in Mexico: Its Development, Dependency, and Spatial Patterns. *In BALAS 2001 Conference Proceedings*. J. Anderson and D. Dimon, eds.
- Price, Richard, and Sally Price  
1992 *Equatoria*. London: Routledge.
- Schechner, Richard  
1985 Between Theater and Anthropology. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.  
1988 Performance Theory. London: Routledge.
- Steggerda, Morris  
1941 The Maya Indians of Yucatan. Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Steiner, Christopher  
1994 *African Art in Transit*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- 1995 The Art of Trade: On the Creation of Value and Authenticity in the African Art Market. *In Traffic in Culture*. G. Marcus and F. Myers, eds. Pp. 151–164. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stewart, Kathleen  
1996 Space on the Side of the Road. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, Lucien, and Ilisa Barbash, prods.  
1993 In and Out of Africa. 59 min. Berkeley: University of California, Extension Center for Media and Independent Learning.
- Tedlock, Dennis  
1983 The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.  
1995 Interpretation, Participation, and the Role of Narrative in Dialogical Anthropology. *In The Dialogical Emergence of Culture*. D. Tedlock and B. Mannheim, eds. Pp. 253–288. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Turner, Victor  
1982 From Ritual to Theater. New York: PAJ Publications.  
1988 Anthropology of Performance. New York: PAJ Publications.
- Visweswaran, Kamala  
1997 Histories of Feminist Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26:591–621.