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Borrowed Meanings: The Appropriation and Commodification of Native American Culture

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Poster Presentation P27

**BORROWED MEANINGS: THE APPROPRIATION AND
COMMERCIALIZATION OF NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE**

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The appropriation and commodification of Native American culture is a broad, complex problem affecting all Native groups in one form or another. This appropriation and commodification includes all aspects of Native identity and culture: land, religion, material culture, and even human remains. Many of the appropriated items have become symbols of American Indian identity, and because of this, they have become a commodity. There is money to be made by both Natives and non-Natives in the sale of cultural items, whether or not those items are in fact authentic, because they are symbols that represent the foreign, and often times romanticized, other. I have chosen to focus on the appropriation and commodification of material culture. I will be using two specific examples, Hopi katsinam and Ojibwe dream catchers, to illustrate how appropriation and commodification can affect Native material culture and the problems that are dealt with concerning that appropriation and commodification.