

**Living in a (Schrödinger's) Box: Jimmie Durham's Use of Strategic Ambiguity
[Abstract]**

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Sustaining an impossible paradox, Jimmie Durham is arguably the most famous Native American artist in the world who is not Native American. This article considers how Durham created his own Schrödinger's box to maintain the possibility of a Cherokee background to keep the value and meaning of his work. Almost every discussion of the artist, from wall texts to monographs, notes that Durham (a) self-identifies as Cherokee and (b) that his Cherokee heritage had been “called into question”—a polite way to state that it had been disproven. Without an Indigenous context, his artworks lose their meaning and relevance. Every scholar, curator, museum, institution, or collector involved in his artwork relies on the possibility that Durham is Native. That the ambiguity around his identity has continued for so long suggests that is crucial not only for the artist and his career, but also for anyone involved with his work.

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