An Archaeology of Integrity and the Art of Cultural Mimicry

Stephen Mrozowski is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts Boston where he also serves as the Director of the Andrew Fiske Memorial Center for Archaeological Research. Professor Mrozowski has conducted archaeological research in Eastern North America, Alaska and Britain. He is currently working in Barbados and Iceland. He is author of more than sixty scholarly essays and The Archaeology of Class in Urban America, co-editor of Lines that Divide: Historical Archaeologies of Race, Class and Gender, co-author of Living on the Boott: Historical Archaeology of the Boott Cotton Mills, Lowell, Massachusetts, and the recently published co-edited volume The Archaeology of Sylvester Manor.

This lecture presents examples of colonized groups appropriating the cultural practices of the colonizing populations as a purposeful form of mimicry that aided their efforts to blunt racial oppression. Examples drawn from case studies involving Native American laborers on a Seventeenth Century Plantation on New York’s Shelter Island and Native households associated with two of John Eliot’s “Praying Indian” communities will be used to support the contention that the art of mimicry provided colonized populations with a strategy for maintaining cultural integrity. By manipulating style and appropriating cultural practices, colonized peoples were able to construct material identities that countered attempts to dehumanize their populations. In the process they were able to sustain communities that in some instances remain viable today.

WHEN: THURSDAY, MARCH 6 @ 4.00 PM
WHERE: 220 EGGERS HALL
THE LECTURE IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC