Kohkum would be Mad at me

kohkum would be mad at me
if she were still here.
for dying my hair
hiding the gray
(hey, I’m not 50 yet)
wearing make-up
and fancy clothes.
supposed to love who you are
and how the Creator made you.
not supposed to try and change that.

Kohkum would be mad at me
if she were still here.

kohkum never had to live with
white people
least not how I have live with white people.
i have them every day, all day,
at work.
(maybe I have it wrong, maybe they got me)
kohkum just had the indian agent
telling her what to do
every now and again
reserve used to be refuge
(maybe it still is)

but, see
I listened to what the white folk told
got me a job
in a fancy university

I hide my hair and the evidence
of gray injun wisdom.
I hide my face, behind a mask
of revlon “easy, breezy, beautiful”

I hide.
(Or maybe, I just like “war paint”)

Patricia Monture’s poetry appears earlier in this volume.