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Indian Art Traditions of the Northwest Coast. Edited by Roy L. Carlson. Seattle: University of Washington Press; Distributed for Archaeology Press, 1984. 214 pp. 237 illus., maps, charts and tables. \$15.00 Paper.

Since their earliest contacts with the American Indians of coastal British Columbia and Alaska, Euroamericans have written glowing praises of Northwest Coast art. Late eighteenth century explorers, nineteenth century ethnographers and contemporary art historians and art oriented anthropologists all have described the sculpture, painting, textiles and basketry of the Coast Salish, Nootka, Kwakiutl, Bella Coola, Tsimshian, Haida and Tlingit as master works. While books illustrating this art abound, most present Northwest Coast art scholars had no access to a survey of regional archaeology which contained information on pre-Contact art. *Indian Art Traditions of the Northwest Coast*, edited by Roy L. Carlson, supplies the much needed historical dimension to the study of Northwest Coast art by presenting a collection of essays on the prehistory of that area.

The essays in this book were originally presented at a symposium, "The Prehistory of Northwest Coast Indian Art," held at Simon Fraser University in 1976, which brought together major figures in Northwest Coast archaeology and anthropology. After an introduction surveying Northwest Coast prehistory, the book contains three chapters on style and iconography of ethnographic art and six chapters detailing the most up-to-date information on archaeological art of specific areas. The work concludes with a discussion of meaning in Northwest Coast prehistoric art.

In chapter 1, "Prehistory of the Northwest Coast," Carlson presents a survey of the known archaeological information of that area. Geological evidence suggests that the Northwest Coast became ice-free around 10,000 B.C., at which time humans began entering what is now British Columbia and Alaska. Three broad periods define the human history of the Northwest Coast. During the Early Period (10,000 to 3500 B.C.), the ancestors of the Peoples who now inhabit the coast migrated into and settled the area. It was during the Middle Period (3500 B.C. to A.D. 500) that cultures more recognizably ancestral to contemporary groups began to develop, with evidence of salmon fishing, extensive wood-working, emphasis on status and wealth, and ceremonialism. In the Late Period (A.D. 500 to Contact) cultures very

similar to historic ones flourished. This book concentrates on the latter two periods, since the art of the Middle Period Peoples developed into a mature style in the Late Period.

The three chapters immediately following the introduction deal with the ethnographic art which often provides keys to interpreting archaeological art. Bill Holm, the foremost scholar of Northwest Coast art, offers an insightful history of this style in his "Form in Northwest Coast Art." According to Holm, flat space divided by incised lines or shapes characterized all early Northwest Coast styles. Those lines and shapes became thought of as negative design elements. Holm suggests that the different styles of historic Northwest Coast art are results of different developments of this prototypical art concept of negative design elements. As always, Holm describes Northwest Coast art so sensitively and perceptively that the reader gains a fresh and deeper understanding of the subject.

The two essays which follow, the late Wilson Duff's "The World is as Sharp as a Knife: Meaning in Northern Northwest Coast Art" and Wayne Suttles' "Productivity and its Constraints: A Coast Salish Case" also enlighten the reader but in different ways. Duff, an imaginative and original interpreter of Northwest Coast art, suggests that, in addition to symbolizing social relations and functioning in sacred contexts, the art expresses deep philosophical concepts. Suttles, unlike both Holm and Duff who deal with several Northwest Coast groups, concentrates on one group, the Coast Salish, and asks why these people who are demonstrably capable of creating excellent art made so little art in comparison to the abundance of art produced further north. Suttles suggests that certain socially determined constraints, based on fear of the potentially harmful consequences of concrete representations, effectively prevented the Coast Salish from producing large quantities of art.

Following these three essays on ethnographic Northwest Coast art style and iconography are six chapters dealing with archaeological art. Although Doris Lundy's "Styles of Coastal Rock Art" discusses rock carvings and paintings from the entire Coastal region, the other articles have narrower foci. George MacDonald's "Prehistoric Art of the Northern Northwest Coast" summarizes the archaeological findings from the Prince Rupert Harbour and Skeena River areas of Tsimshian territory and briefly compares them to Haida data from the Queen Charlotte

Islands. MacDonald's detailed chronology and explanation of uses of this art provide a useful framework for his interpretations of the possible sacred significance of specific pieces. Roy Carlson's "Prehistoric Art of the Central Coast of British Columbia" does much the same for the art made by the ancestors of the Bella Bella and Bella Coola. Arnoud Stryd's "Prehistoric Mobile Art from the Mid-Fraser and Thompson River Areas" describes the archaeological art of interior British Columbia, while Richard Daugherty and Janet Friedman's "An Introduction to Ozette Art" surveys the impressive array of late prehistoric Nootkan art buried over 450 years ago by a massive mudslide and only recently uncovered. The longest essay in the book, "Prehistoric Art of the Lower Fraser Region" by the late Charles E. Borden, offers a detailed and interesting survey of 9000 years of Coast Salish art. Borden discusses general characteristics of the art of each chronological period and then analyzes specific pieces, comparing them to earlier prototypes and describing changes and continuities in both style and meaning. Some of the most visually striking examples of prehistoric Northwest Coast art, especially those from the Marpole Phase, come from this area and are discussed with sensitivity by Borden.

The concluding essay is Carlson's "Change and Continuity in Northwest Coast Art." Acknowledging that one cannot interpret archaeological art with the detail and subtlety possible in analyses of ethnographic art (such as that displayed by Suttles in his article on the Coast Salish), Carlson proposes a general explanation of meaning in Northwest Coast art. According to his view, all archaeological art can be interpreted as visual representations of sacred power images, whether they be guardian spirits, shamanic beings, secret society supernaturals or crests. Carlson argues that these beliefs in spiritual powers motivated the creation of artworks which began in the most rudimentary forms around 2500 B.C., became considerably more elaborate about 500 B.C., and developed into a complex and mature style by A.D. 1100.

Indian Art Traditions of the Northwest Coast is an important book that summarizes the current state of knowledge on Northwest Coast archaeology in a cogent and clear fashion. It provides a valuable history of the art of this region and offers interesting interpretations of both ethnographic and prehistoric art. Although

its black and white illustrations are not of the highest quality (as one might expect in so inexpensive a book), it presents abundant visual documentation of the art material. This valuable contribution ensures that future scholars of books on Northwest Coast art will no longer ignore the prehistoric artworks of the American Indians of British Columbia and southeast Alaska.

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