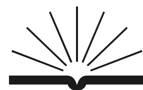
NATIVE ART OF THE NORTHWEST COAST

A HISTORY OF CHANGING IDEAS

Edited by Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Jennifer Kramer, and Ḳi-ḳe-in



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Preface

This volume sets out to both record and scrutinize definitions of Northwest Coast Native art and its boundaries. While confirming the richness of this art, these pages reveal the ways in which conflicts, on the one hand, and an excess of enthusiasm, on the other, have relegated key aspects of its history, including the dynamic of cultural encounter and the work of some individuals, to relative obscurity.

Many classics of the literature are represented here. Some of them recur in different contexts throughout this book, which is fitting since arguing for one way of reading, or looking, or valuing is not its intention. The classics appear alongside lesser known sources and interpretations that have at some point been obscured or forgotten but that reveal the archaeology of knowledge and serve here as historiographic counterpoint.

As with Indigenous people, Indigenous knowledge was, through much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, submerged, if not actively suppressed, from the public sphere in British Columbia. In the late 1960s, the disparity between the easy accessibility of books and catalogues stemming from the unconstrained scholarly work enabled by the Northwest Coast archive and the relative invisibility of Native cultural production in Vancouver was striking and troubling. It was this disparity that gave rise to the idea for this book.

In the 1950s, Vancouver had acquired the dubious moniker "Totemland," linking the place, via the visually spectacular, to the Native. At the same time, the lives and works of Ellen Neel, Mungo Martin, and Bill Reid were beginning to have public effect. So too were alliances among Native people, such as the Native Indian Brotherhood founded in 1944, helping them to deal with, and to resist, the exceptional conditions under which they lived – imposed by the 1876 Indian Act and the system of Indian residential schools. In this setting, Doug Cranmer opened The Talking Stick in 1962, one of the first Native-run galleries in Canada. A few years later, new work by George Clutesi and Robert Davidson with older pieces from the collection at the University of British Columbia's

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Museum of Anthropology went on view at Expo '67 in Montreal. Even so, Native art and imagery were not, as they are now, an omnipresent part of the urban fabric – central to land claims, commerce, the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, and doctoral dissertations. They were, rather, the stuff of First Nations lives, apparently lived out of sight in a city that had grown up heedlessly on unceded Native land.

The uneasy relationship between Native lives and representations of the Native, neatly encapsulated by "Totemland," has also always been evident in writing – historical, ethnographic, sociological, art historical, biographical, and autobiographical – that for better or worse constitutes a Native archive of sorts. In recording memory, this archive has shaped it. But there are signs of change. An early paragraph in *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom*, written collaboratively by anthropologist Leslie Robertson and the Kwagu'ł Gix̱sa̱m Clan (2012, 30), gives a clear account of the shifting and productive relationship possible between a group of Indigenous people and the published archive:

> Recounted in conversations and regenerated in new publications, academic representations are alive. They are a potent medium through which people evaluate sometimes difficult pasts and re-examine individual lives alongside renewed customary activities. As subjects and as readers, Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw peoples are no strangers to literature and scholarship. Indeed, a constructive dialogue about past events and persons in Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw territories takes place, in part, by discussing the ways they are inscribed in published works. Perhaps several decades ago it might have been possible to ignore this shared literary sphere, but today scholarly works have a noted presence in public memory and in the lived experience of 'na̱'mima members.

Looking for support for the idea of this book, an anthology that aims to situate the published archive historically, Charlotte Townsend-Gault turned to Gloria Cranmer Webster, who warned that it would be "an enormous challenge." However, she did not say that it was not worth doing. As the plan for this project took shape, Jennifer Kramer and Ḳi-ḳe-in joined as co-editors. Kramer's long relationship with the Nuxalk community in Bella Coola, where she learned of ambivalence around the values of cultural treasures, so often termed "art," led to her book *Switchbacks*. And this project would have gone nowhere without Ḳi-ḳe-in's encyclopedic knowledge and the constant if gentle chiding of his non-Native friends.

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Initially, the format of the book was modelled on *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Harrison and Wood 1992), the first in a successful series of art history concordances published by the Open University in the United Kingdom. The topics under which the materials for our book were assembled similarly attempt to identify the dominant themes, the significant historical breaks, and the knowing recursive deployment of themes and histories that uniquely characterize that time/space known as "the Northwest Coast." Discussions that began in Charlotte Townsend-Gault's graduate seminar at UBC in 1998 on the role of historiography in the course of Native art and its reception led to formative suggestions for our themes from Aaron Glass and Kimberly Phillips, who were graduate students at the time. As for our contributors, we have been able to draw on the expertise of an extraordinary range of acknowledged experts. There are of course absent voices, just as there are neglected themes. This we regret. The project is ambitious, but it would be absurdly hubristic to claim total inclusivity.

Several contributors to this volume also consider the difficult matter of defining what, and where, "the Northwest Coast" actually is – among them, from their different perspectives, Bruce Miller, Ira Jacknis, and Kristin Dowell. In the broadest sense, we have worked with the larger topographical region extending from northern Alaska to the Columbia River in the south. Distinct human populations both do and do not correspond with this region; they have been mapped onto it by others. Some claims to sovereignty over historical territories, or parts of them, as in the Nisga'a Final Agreement of 2000, are now honoured, in other cases less so. The history of the definition is itself inseparable from the idea that the anthology attempts to explore.

Most chapters consist of an introductory essay followed by excerpts from the literature, with each excerpt preceded by its own introduction. With expert guidance from a diversity of authors giving their own reasons for the directions taken, the emphases given, and the connections made, readers can move back and forth between introductory essay and excerpt, to compare their own responses to that of their guide, to follow up on the cross-references, to turn to the illustrations for delight or for detail. This makes for a volatile experience, and, in the process, readers should be prepared to encounter new ideas about the old ones and interpretations that unsettle the conventions that have become part of "the idea of Northwest Coast Native art." A complete bibliography appears at the end of the book.

A stimulating result of inviting people with a diversity of backgrounds and approaches to shape themes in their own ways is that some chapters have no

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excerpts. One chapter is simply visual. The contributors in these chapters tell their own stories, reminding us that knowledge does not necessarily reside with the printed word. Native peoples in many parts of the world have pointed to the incompatibilities between their ways of organizing knowledge and those that a book can encompass. Nor can it be said any longer, if it ever could, that a book is the ultimate recourse of the knowledge seeker. The web that has been cast over the globe has changed everything.

Throughout this volume, the terms "Indian," "Native," "First Nations," "Indigenous," and "Aboriginal" are found. Variations are inevitable in the textual history presented, and nothing has been done to standardize their use across the introductory essays to the chapters written by the contributing editors. From the extracts, it is abundantly clear that the variant uses and abuses of the terms by which people know themselves and are known by others are markers of the history of the discourse as much as they indicate any current differences. For the rendering of Native words, the book follows the orthographies specified by its contributors and as they occur in individual excerpts. Ḳi-ḳe-in himself prefers Nuuchaanulth, while elsewhere the more usual Nuu-chah-nulth is used. Every reasonable attempt has been made to secure permission to reproduce all material used. If there are errors or omissions, they are wholly unintentional, and we would be grateful to learn of them.

This book aims to confont the disturbing disjunctures between a dominant idea of art perceived as external or culturally detached, Indigenous epistemologies, and apparently intractable political and racial realities. It brings together multiple voices that are not aligned to any one message. Unsurprisingly, for an endeavour of this scale, with its commitment to consultation, what has emerged may not be exactly the book originally envisaged. However, its detailed readings amply demonstrate the mutability of the idea of art and how, where, when, and by whom its production and reception have been valued.

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NATIVE ART OF THE NORTHWEST COAST

A HISTORY OF CHANGING IDEAS

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CHARLOTTE TOWNSEND-GAULT,
JENNIFER KRAMER, AND ḲI-ḳE-IN

Introduction

The Idea of Northwest Coast Native Art

"Northwest Coast Native art" has proved to be a powerful idea, both contingent and essential, assuming many guises over the centuries. Since the mid-1700s, objects deriving from the cultures of the northeast coast of the Pacific Ocean have been displayed and exchanged, desired and classified and interpreted, stolen and confiscated, bought, sold, and displayed again in many parts of the world. The subject of this book is the fluctuating history of the idea that these objects are "art" as it has unfolded over the past 250 years or so. Its premise is that the idea of Northwest Coast Native art has been historically constructed through texts as much as through the global diaspora of the objects themselves. This is also a contested idea because for many Indigenous people the term "art" is itself problematic, an external imposition. But equally, for First Nations as for others, the idea of art has been accepted as conferring high value on the objects and ceremonials of their cultures. Any idea of art must involve ideas about its audience. If the term "art" confers a universal status, it should make no difference to what culture the audience belongs. But this is contested too.

The unequal power relations of transcultural encounter have suppressed Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. As both Canada and the United States shifted from colonial to colonizing status, social relations between Native and non-Native remained chronically asymmetrical. Liberal democracies have complex, often hidden, limits to their defining tolerance, limits that all members have a role in setting. Conflicting definitions of "art" are entangled in a history of shifting ideas about racial and cultural difference as represented in state policy and legislation, in the political life of institutions, and in disciplinary histories – anthropology, archaeology, social geography, history, art history, and law. These, in turn, are inseparable from the history of museums, schools, universities, and systems of support and patronage, both public and private. *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas* aims to provide something of this backstory. As Ḳi-ḳe-in reminds us, this story of conflicting definitions includes, to take just one example, the consequences recognized in the recent

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British Columbia Supreme Court decision (2009) that Nuu-chah-nulth people have, and have always had, the "right" to fish for all species and trade in them: "Fish has always been one of the foundations of our economy and lifestyle and is represented in countless sung, sculpted, woven, danced, painted, dramatically enacted forms." The decision at trial recognized the pre-contact practices of the Nuu-chah-nulth and their overwhelming degree of dependence on fisheries resources for food and trade.[1]

"Since the premise of this book is to account for some of the history of a contested field," says Ḳi-ḳe-in, "it is necessary to show that the problem itself is, and has been, one of naming. The very language embeds a history of the ideas of a particular moment. There is a history of terms associated with looking at this material, all of them burdened with meanings."

The literature on the Indigenous cultures of the Northwest Coast of North America is vast, varied, and unevenly known. Some texts have become familiar, even canonical, and widely available; some are more quoted than consulted, more often referred to than read; some are out of print or buried in obscure places. Sources having a bearing on "Northwest Coast Native art" are by no means confined to those that are ostensibly about art in any straightforward way. Taken together they amount to an unstable archive that has tended to privilege some modes of thought over others. Oral histories, unwritten memory, even where their significance is recognized, have often been marginalized by those who produced the texts, categorized the objects, assigned their values, and left the records.

This work of critical historiography revisits the archive and attempts two things: to make accessible for the first time in one place a broad selection of the 250 years of writings on Northwest Coast "art" with excerpted and cited sources covering both published and unpublished materials, secondary references, policy documents, and some texts not previously available in English; and to provide historical context for the production and interpretation of the texts in order to show something of how a body of knowledge has been shaped. The intent is to complicate the tendency to make Northwest Coast art into a spectacular but one-dimensional monolith that obscures and reduces the values of the societies of origin and ignores the wider histories of thought that have contributed to its production. It may not be possible to redress, let alone undo, the suppressions of the past or to fully recognize the omissions that persist into the present of Northwest Coast studies. But it is possible to show something of how diverse intellectual traditions, which in some tragic respects are at odds, influence, stimulate, and clash with each other. Without the exchanges, both violent and subtle,

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that happen between people of different cultures, a situation unchanged by the Internet, this would be an empty book, a vacuous project.

There are many ways to organize an anthology. This one, which responds to Aboriginal critiques of colonial knowledge formations, also takes into account approaches emerging from the work of Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and the school of subaltern studies in South Asia. Influential through the latter decades of the twentieth century, these approaches demonstrated how unequal power relations create hierarchies of knowledge. The so-called writing culture movement stressed the extent to which hierarchies were reinforced through certain privileged modes of communication – such as writing. Text-based knowledge or discourse could benefit from some destabilizing: "The meaning of the text is the sum of its misreadings," as Stephen Tyler (1986, 135) expressed the matter in his chapter in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Preferring the more inclusive "archive" over "discourse," the scheme eventually decided upon was to approach the archive roughly chronologically but under headings that, because they overlap, would draw attention to shifting intellectual, aesthetic, and disciplinary paradigms. Wishing to avoid both an institutional and a singular authorial voice, the problem was how to represent this diversity with any accuracy without lapsing into postmodern relativism. A possible solution was to invite commentary from a number of people who would bring vastly different perspectives and personal histories to the project. As the scope of the project expanded, the number of contributors grew to twenty-eight. They were invited to adjust the topics and dates assigned to them as they thought appropriate, to make their own selections of material, and to contextualize and comment in their own manner. They – artists, art historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, curators, and others – have scrutinized the implication of explorers, historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, romantics, surrealists, speculators, artists, and curators in the production of Northwest Coast Native art. The results are variously personal, scholarly, political, polemical, and combinations of all of these. Some of the contributors identify overlooked materials or occluded histories. Some provide alternative narratives that overturn the aesthetic nostrums of the past or the pieties of collaboration that have characterized the early years of the twenty-first century. Some would have nothing to do with the idea of the Native as disempowered victim.

Among the consequences of this format is the rather rare opportunity to encounter variously exegetical, historiographical, or oppositional readings alongside the established foundational texts and others far less known. It becomes apparent that some interpretations have been oppressed and others privileged,

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while others are forgotten, have become unfashionable, or lie dormant. Through its diversity and overlaps, its internal contradictions and disagreements, the anthology aims to work against the institutionalization of a body of knowledge. Fundamental to the contestation of the field, then, is that oral history, unwritten memory, disputed and non-standardized values have always been at play and have always been underrepresented. This book, this text, enfolds many other texts, but part of its self-critique is its recognition that cultural treasures or objectifications of culture, visual signs, or crest designs are themselves carriers of meaning articulated in ways that cannot be put into words in any language. Although a number of the essays encompass a disciplinary canon, the cumulative effect should be the opposite of canonical. In this way, some of the critical work is done by the compilation itself.

The Northwest Coast is hardly alone in its need for such critical scrutiny. Mohawk art historian Deborah Doxtator (1997, 37) had the fate of a continent in mind when she wrote the following:

> It is as though thousands of years of Indigenous peoples constructing, interacting with, interpreting, and reflecting cultural metaphors (on the land, in North America) never really happened or is somehow "unknowable" because it is articulated from a different intellectual tradition reflecting different knowledge structures. Along with the devaluation of (our) history colonialism has also devalued Indigenous intellectual thought, and in many cases fails to see it as an intellectual tradition at all.

More recently, Paul Chaat Smith (2007, 382), a curator at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, and a contributor to this volume, has written of the role of Native intellectuals that "we must be really good at reading a really really bad map."

Subjecting the accumulating archive of the Northwest Coast art idea to reflexive analysis is not new. As an early example, Nuu-chah-nulth artist, scholar, and orator George Clutesi's book *Potlatch* (1969) arose from his own negotiated relation with the white man's values and ways of expressing them. Erna Gunther's *Indian Life on the Northwest Coast of North America, as Seen by the Early Explorers and Fur Traders during the Last Decades of the Eighteenth Century* (1972) brought together eighteenth-century explorers' accounts of what they saw and how they interacted with the people they encountered. In her seminal "Creations of Mystics and Philosophers: The White Man's Perceptions of Northwest Coast Indian Art from the 1930s to the Present," Aldona Jonaitis (1981) shows how

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successive layers of outsider interpretation had accumulated. "Outsiders" are found in various places, as Graeme Chalmers (1995) points out in "European Ways of Talking about Northwest Coast First Nations." In "Potlatch and Totem: The Attraction of America's Northwest Coast," Isabelle Schulte-Tenckhoff (1988) argues that contemporary tourism can only ever replicate the skewed power relations established at first contact by outsiders intent on discovering either the "noble" or the "ignoble" savage. John Sutton Lutz's *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (2008) represents the growing recognition that ideas do not merely "shift" but also emerge from complex, often transcultural, relationships.

In their survey of the history of ethnological research, included in the venerable *Handbook of North American Indians*, volume 7, *The Northwest Coast*, Wayne Suttles and Aldona Jonaitis (1990, 81) write that "'Northwest Coast art' as a subject for analysis and theoretical discussion has generally meant the art of a region extending from the Tlingit southward at most as far as the Nootkan and Coast Salish tribes." Significantly, the term appears in quotation marks, the authors recognizing that the time was past, if it ever existed, for an unproblematized, blanket term, even one that was an accolade and that would be thought by some as conferring status. Daisy Sewid-Smith's article "In Time Immemorial" (1991) presages other work by First Nations writers, giving less entangled accounts of what is being interpreted and for whom. In the film *Box of Treasures* (Olin 1983), which deals with the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw value system that underlies the U'mista Cultural Centre at Alert Bay, Gloria Cranmer Webster is rueful about the disjuncture between the amount of "anthropology" done on the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw and the low level of public comprehension. The chequered history of film's attempt to raise this level is the subject of Rosalind Morris's *New Worlds from Fragments: Film, Ethnography, and the Representation of Northwest Coast Cultures* (1994). Christopher Bracken's *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History* (1997) is the most thoroughgoing analysis to date of the way in which texts – in this case the administrative records concerning potlatching – produce their own subject. Daniel Francis's *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (1992) and Marcia Crosby's "Construction of the Imaginary Indian" (1991) articulate a problem of which many were already well aware. Crosby's widely cited text appeared in *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*. Edited by the artist Stan Douglas (1991), the collection aimed, in the spirit of its moment, to scrutinize self-reflexively the histories of its own formation. Fallout from the deconstructionist tendency is also evident in Margaret Dubin's telling "Sanctioned Scribes: How Critics and Historians

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Write the Native American Art World" (1999) and "'The Foundation of All Future Researches': Franz Boas, George Hunt, Native American Texts, and the Construction of Modernity," by Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman (1999).

Although, until recently, the published record has been to a large extent the product of outsiders' and colonizers' preconceptions, it also records something of what Native people were prepared to disclose about their cultures and, as Marianne Nicolson shows in this volume, is used recursively by First Nations stimulated to learn and provoked to correct. French philosopher Jacques Derrida, in his influential analysis of what he took to be a universal tendency, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1996), was not thinking of ethnically based distinctions. Consider the critical mining of the archive in the work of Native artists as different from one another as Marianne Nicolson and Robert Davidson or Larry McNeil and Brian Jungen. Consider exhibitions such as *It Is Written in the Earth* (1997) and *From under the Delta* (1998), designed to show that an archive of a different sort resides in objects, technologies, and materials. In other words, as Ḳi-ḳe-in says, "people stand in very different relations to these texts, this history. They read things differently at different times in their lives. Some of these texts are now being mined for new meanings and new information, helping land claims, or spiritual practice." Consider too Nicholas Galanin's work (see Claxton, this volume) *Tsu Héidei Shugaxtutaan,* which mixes a Tlingit raven dance with a contemporary "robot" dance and translates as "we will again open this container of wisdom that has been left in our care."

Increasingly, and in ways that may be related to the acknowledgment of "preexisting Aboriginal rights" in Section 35 of Canada's Constitution Act, 1982, First Nations are insisting that Native art has meaning because it meets their own social or political or personal needs. As Chief Robert Joseph (1998, 18) writes in the catalogue for *Down from the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast,* "the masks of the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast are powerful objects that assist us in defining our place in the cosmos, in a world of endless change and complexity, masks offer a continuum for native people to acknowledge our connection to the universe." A growing number of publications, documentaries, and websites initiated by a First Nation or band are telling their histories, recapturing their memories, and asserting their rights, among them *Na Amwaaltga Ts'msiyeen* (Kelly and Marsden et al. ca. 1992), *Bringing Our Ancestors Home: The Repatriation of Nisga'a Artifacts* (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1998), *From Time before Memory: The People of K'amligihah'haahl* (ca. 1996), and *Musqueam: A Living Culture* (2006).

For these reasons, this book, which both records and critiques the formation of the idea of Northwest Coast Native art, opens with an acknowledgment of the

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significance of oral history. Daisy Sewid-Smith (Chapter 1) performs something of an opening ceremony for this volume in her own distinctive Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw voice. Speaking or writing only for her own nation accords with protocol, but doing so also offers a sharp corrective to the entrenched notion of some generic and hypothetical "Northwest Coast." She points out, without needing to disclose details, how what has been known as "Kwakiutl art" to generations of admiring outsiders is grounded in Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw social and cosmological beliefs and how closely the two are linked. Sewid-Smith brings her characteristic close attention as an experienced participant scholar to her account of colonial incursions that is both nuanced and unforgiving.

Ḳi-ḳe-in's "Hilth Hiitinkis – From the Beach" (Chapter 2) eloquently expresses the need to understand the Nuu-chah-nulth traditional belief system in order to comprehend the integrated values of reciprocity, responsibility, ownership, and authority that are embodied in Nuu-chah-nulth tangible and intangible cultural belongings. Reflecting on the superficial understandings of Nuu-chah-nulth material culture and social organization by explorers, missionaries, and collectors, Ḳi-ḳe-in offers a corrective: "What follows comes from our villages, it was and is our position." This is the position shared by many First Nations artists working in diverse media who are seeking renewed, and new, connections to the material cultures of their pasts and who have become more outspoken on the limiting effects of the categories of art. A related challenge with which this volume contends has been how to recognize the oral and visual transmission of knowledge in a predominantly text-based record. Declining to share more "encounter stories," Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas (Chapter 3) has produced a graphic account for this volume that encapsulates some core Haida values in a form that tries to accommodate the oral and the visual. His publication *Red: A Haida Manga* (2009), whose book form must be dismantled in order to be "read" correctly, reveals specifically Haida ways of being.

Ira Jacknis (Chapter 4) offers a substantive overview of the first century of contact between European explorers/settlers and the peoples of the Northwest Coast. He explains how these scenarios of early interaction "demanded a kind of basic definition and categorization, for the arts as well as fundamental human traits," but often produced shallow and partial understandings of Native artifacts due to language barriers and brief exchanges. Jacknis outlines why certain types of objects (e.g., chiefs' clothing, women's labrets, kerfed boxes) received the most attention in published diaries, drawings, and curiosity collections, and he notes the sustained interest in tracing the first recorded sightings of totem poles.

Given the history of complex linkages between art and archaeology on the Northwest Coast, Andrew Martindale (Chapter 5) considers the current tendency

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to move away from the determinist view – that is, that things generate culture – toward more contextual interpretations of the relations among humans, things, and meanings. These are negotiated through practice and agency. In providing a history of archaeology on the Northwest Coast, Martindale queries the extent to which it parallels the history of local research on specific sites and in specific cases. He works with the idea that, as meanings are negotiated, art may be an agent of translation across otherwise "untranslatable space."

Andrea Laforet (Chapter 6), herself a museum professional and seasoned negotiator at treaty tables and over repatriation issues, complicates the idea that the "problem" of collecting emerges from encounters between knowledge paradigms and conflicting mandates. Her experience of the *realpolitik* of current negotiations over value leads her to search the texts, the correspondence, and the records for the "intertexts" where those values became inscribed. Importantly, she shows how collecting has its own history, affected by personal, institutional, national, and international relations.

Judith Berman (Chapter 7) provides an in-depth analysis of the motivations and methods of Tlingit cultural intermediary Louis Shotridge when he worked as exhibit preparer, ethnographer, collector, and curator for the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia between 1905 and 1932. Shotridge's primary methodology was storytelling, using clan histories to illustrate Tlingit values and to convey the interrelations of crest art (*at.oow*) and genealogy. Shotridge was always concerned to show that object movements, iconography, and art styles, along with Tlingit travel, trade, and intermarriage, were the result of conscious decisions by living individuals, not abstract cultural beliefs. Berman argues that it is in the details of Shotridge's writings that his strategies emerge.

Tracing the establishment of anthropology as a discipline from 1870 to 1950, anthropologist Bruce Granville Miller (Chapter 8) chronicles the theoretical debates among comparative evolutionism, Boasian historical particularism, and Maussian exchange theory as they affect the interpretation of the arts of the Northwest Coast. Miller discusses the significance, in the United States, of anthropology beginning as a museum-based discipline but moving to the university in the mid-twentieth century (a trajectory that is now beginning to reverse). Methodologically, he explicates the Boasian and Maussian theoretical legacies by showing the generative linkages between mentor and pupil and their impacts on the analysis of *l'art nègre*.

John Barker (Chapter 9) persuasively argues for studying the missionary record for what it can tell us about the rapid changes to Native life and art. However discredited today, missionaries were both witnesses and participants, and their chronicles provide access to historical viewpoints. Barker makes the important

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point that, while missionaries often demanded the destruction of Northwest Coast material culture as part of conversion, many were collectors themselves or aided those who wished to collect. They were also responsible for circulating photographs and drawings of Native objects in missionary newsletters and slideshows, thus inadvertently raising the level of non-Native awareness of this material culture.

Gloria Cranmer Webster (Chapter 10) writes from the position of an insider who has lived the legacy of "the dark years" (1920-45) – "a [rattle] shaker among many [rattle] readers." She vividly chronicles the effects of missionization, residential schooling, wage labour, and the anti-potlatch law on the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw. But she asserts that through all these depleting experiences her people persevered in their arts and ceremonies through artistic lineages and underground potlatching. Her words serve as historical witness, but they activate as well as recount, incarnating and calling upon the power of her people.

Among the several sections of the anthology devoted to the consequences of modernity, notably when it is counterpoised with "primitivism," Marie Mauzé (Chapter 11) offers a comprehensive overview of the connections among Surrealist artists, active in Paris and New York, the intellectual and other influences on them, and the enormous influence that they had, in turn, on the interpretation of Native art, which continues today.

Leslie Dawn (Chapter 12) mines the archival record to reveal the ties between Northwest Coast Native art and the formation of Canadian national identity. Significantly, he pushes back the date of the non-Native recognition of the "revival of Northwest Coast art" to 1939 – the year when the Canadian government commissioned Mungo Martin to carve totem poles for the New York World's Fair. He explores how the perception of Aboriginal people as figures of social decrepitude morphed to the point where they became national icons in the representation of Canadian identity. This, he shows, emerged from the desire to incorporate Northwest Coast art into Canadian patrimony in the 1920s.

Scott Watson (Chapter 13) has long been interested in the relationship, largely submerged, but nevertheless influential, between Native art and the development of a modernist artistic culture in Vancouver, which apparently ignored the Native work but was in fact indebted to it. Most specifically, the Arts and Crafts movement, imported from Europe, imbricated Native signs and designs into its pedagogy. That this was ostensibly thought to benefit Native school children should not disguise the fact that paternalism toward others is closely connected with benefit for those in authority, helping to secure their positions and to provide them with history and continuity. Relatively little of this history has been published to date, especially in comparison to other issues covered in this book.

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Ronald W. Hawker (Chapter 14) traces an often forgotten period in Canadian history (1930-60) when non-Native social reformers promoted the production and sale of Northwest Coast Native art to alleviate Depression-era reserve poverty and to serve as a platform from which to fight for the expansion of Native rights. Interestingly, this institutionalization of the "curio" market for Native profit brought government agencies, such as the Department of Indian Affairs, into working partnerships with museums, anthropologists, and educators. It also served to move the meaning of Native objects from Native belief systems to Western notions of art and artifact. Hawker concludes by arguing for the influence that these social reformers had on Northwest Coast Native art in the years that followed, even if it has gone unrecognized.

Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse (Chapter 15) has the task of tracking the origins, development, and consequences of form, formalism, and formalist analysis, which have insinuated themselves into every aspect of the production and reception of Northwest Coast art, defining it for some and diminishing it for others. Formalism is inseparable from the modernist project; it is also inseparable from notions of standards, materials, and techniques. As an authority on the silver bracelets of the region, she provides a revealing history of technique.

Standing in productive relationship to Bunn-Marcuse's chapter is that of Judith Ostrowitz (Chapter 16), who attends to the period from 1953 to 1984. Ostrowitz is one of several contributors who assess the force of modernity, its "intellectual, scientific, political, and artistic concepts," and its democratizing strategies on the Northwest Coast. Specifically, she considers the conflict that modernist formalism brought to the fore over access to the increasingly formalized, and thus increasingly organized, declarations of cultural expressions and values.

"Renaissance" is one of the several recurring tropes of Northwest Coast Native art that sheds more heat than light. In tracking specific textual references, Aaron Glass (Chapter 17) submits the term to a historical scrutiny, weighs the effect of its relationship to the European Renaissance, and shows how it has been used to both positive and negative effect. In a field of discourse not noted for its criticality, the notion of "rebirth" that presumes a "death" has been used to mobilize a critique that extends far beyond the realm of art.

Marianne Nicolson (Chapter 18) highlights the Native contribution to the ethnographic record and the importance of auto-ethnography with particular reference to the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw. She emphasizes that telling one's own story, which includes placing oneself within an extensive genealogy of ancestors, is essentially a traditional act of Native cultural production, not a foreign ethnographic one (even if written). Significantly, she establishes that all Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw

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artistic activity is autobiographical and happens within a web of ancestral relations. Therefore, she argues that counter-hegemonic Indigenous thought and writing can be supplemented by Native auto-ethnographies to encourage cultural continuity and maintenance of community norms.

Alice Marie Campbell (Chapter 19) tracks the shifting relationships between anthropological theory and anthropological practice in the Northwest Coast region during the postwar period. She traces the regionalization of Northwest Coast anthropological production and argues that regional anthropologists in the early postwar period responded to locally derived urgencies in order to secure support, and relevance, in the region. One of the results of this was an effective opting out of contemporary anthropological debates; another was the formation of a determining binary between "empirical" or "applied" and "critical" analytical directions that has been, and continues to be, unproductive.

The commercial success of the art, developing exponentially at all levels in British Columbia and Alaska, has been skirted in the literature, which prefers to lend a higher tone to the legitimizing of Native art. Karen Duffek (Chapter 20) shows that market forces have long been a determining factor in the directions taken by "Northwest Coast art," and she establishes a place for this tendency in the growing transnational discussion on commoditization and the relationship between the Indigenous and tourism-derived economy.

Writing as a member of the Snuneymuxw First Nation and as a lawyer, Douglas S. White (Chapter 21) analyzes the documents that have controlled Native lives since the late eighteenth century, including "that extraordinary piece of legislation," the Indian Act and its amendments. He also shows how, in his personal experience, these documents have failed to exert control. First Nations have been caught up in the process of using the instruments of the state to challenge it. Increasingly, they are successful. In a comparable way, Native "art" is using the system of art to challenge and enrich the global art arena.

In Chapter 22, Ḳi-ḳe-in asks the crucial question for whom is all this Northwest Coast art writing done? He answers definitively that it is not for his people, the Nuu-chah-nulth. Tracing the creative output of explorers, colonial agents, anthropologists, art historians, and museum curators as they write on Nuu-chah-nulth culture, Ḳi-ḳe-in exposes motivations that are mostly self-serving, lack a holistic understanding of Nuu-chah-nulth beliefs and values, and are usually detrimental, whether intentionally or not, to the Nuu-chah-nulth. He concludes with the changes wrought by Nuu-chah-nulth writers authorizing their own texts.

"Property" is one of the terms that appears to have a translatable equivalence across cultures, but, in its usage, the "untranslatable space," which Martindale

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refers to in his reflections on the translation of meanings in the discourse around objects, is much in evidence. Property is a status-conferring notion, like art, but this is deceptive. Pursuing her study of variant values within specific communities and enriched by an appreciation of their display in museum settings, Jennifer Kramer (Chapter 23) draws reflexively on a Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw trope of "fighting with property." Implying the competitive display and exchange of status-enhancing wealth, or "property," she uses the trope to show how notions of reciprocity, or failed reciprocity, also form the dynamic of the scholarly debate.

The historical objectification process in "classic" displays of Northwest Coast culture, exemplified by Boas's Northwest Coast Hall at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, serves as the launching position for Aldona Jonaitis's synopsis of the academic and Indigenous critiques that transformed North American museum exhibitions into collaborative spaces of shared authority (Chapter 24). The growth of repatriation requests and tribal museums is tied to the recognition that objects are "wrapped" in different meanings through their cultural biographies and may not be adequately interpreted in European-based museums. In order for the significance of colonization, globalization, and Indigenous cultural authority to be conveyed, the non-Native museum visitors' experiential and didactic needs in the collaborative museum space should not be overlooked.

Martha Black (Chapter 25) dispels the commonly held notion that collaborative museology had its origins in the 1990s. Instead, she recalls that Native involvement with Northwest Coast museological representation began in the late nineteenth century with Native ethnographic collaborators and, by the 1950s and 1960s, was well established at the British Columbia Provincial Museum (now the Royal British Columbia Museum) and UBC's Museum of Anthropology. While dissecting the postcolonial discourse that assumes unequal power relations between ethnographers and collaborators, Black reveals the multiple agendas, sometimes overlapping, sometimes at odds, for continuing with collaborative museum exhibitions, documentation projects, and object care and handling standards in the present. She argues that museum processes must be made more visible to guard against further miscommunications and misunderstandings.

Kristin L. Dowell (Chapter 26) argues for the important place of Aboriginal filmmaking in this anthology while balking at the restrictive definitions of Northwest Coast art. She calls for the study of cultural mediation (media processes) over media productions as the key to evaluating the redemptive possibilities of Aboriginal filmmaking. Dowell demonstrates that Aboriginal filmmaking is activism as much as it is art making, if not more so, and that it can be revolutionary because it frees Native artists from reproducing aesthetic canons. Through a

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chronological and causative history of Vancouver's Aboriginal filmmaking environment, Dowell demonstrates the opportunities for mixed-blood, two-spirited, or young filmmakers to represent their identities in this new medium.

In Chapter 27, Charlotte Townsend-Gault draws on the idea that "claims" derive from rights in order to give an account of the directions taken by the "claims" made for "art." Since the Supreme Court of Canada's *Delgamuukw* decision in 1997, these claims are made by First Nations. Nationalist essentialisms, expedient and protectionist, involve both an expansion and a critique of the visual and lead to other kinds of contestations between those for whom there is a correct, or controllable, way of doing things and those for whom adaptation to change and contingency is both inevitable and desirable.

Paul Chaat Smith (Chapter 28) weighs the fashion for identity politics and finds it wanting. He suggests that contemporary transcultural discourse may be stuck. In asking why this should be so, he takes into account Marcia Crosby's epochal version of some of the widely recognized disjunctures between representation and reality and then considers the potential of initiatives such as that expressed in the Yuquot Agenda Paper as a possible way forward.

Dana Claxton (Chapter 29) shows that sites for display, discussion, and distortion are expanding exponentially on the Web. Large parts of the archive in any medium can now be accessed online. There are inventive new modes for interacting with it and thus of passing on and developing cultural understanding. As Ḳi-ḳe-in says, "there is a whole bunch of young Native people out there who don't know how to operate in a discussion like this. They type more naturally than they talk. It's what they do. But we need them." They are texting and chatting and arguing via Bebo, MySpace, Facebook, and other interactive social sites in the blogosphere, where young artists and many others are finding new ways to work out what the idea of Northwest Coast art means to them.

Yet the Web's allure should not be allowed to disguise the warped kind of recognition, or non-recognition, that current arrangements give to Native artists, particularly women artists. Claxton's account of the speed and multifariousness of what the Web can offer to Indigenous cultures is poised between anxiety about vulnerability and enthusiasm about its potential to circulate intangibles.

Townsend-Gault's final chapter, "The Material and the Immaterial across Borders," takes into account the incursions of international boundaries and some of the effects of unmarked borders – those between disclosure and disguise – on the course and discourses of Native art.

An important goal of this book has been to ensure that the contemporary work done by artists and scholars in this region receives recognition and that the debates and arguments swirling around it carry on, even when – and especially

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when – they disrupt the canon. Some of the most significant artists to have emerged recently as inheritors, reinterpreters, and disrupters of the Northwest Coast idea are featured here – among them Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Marianne Nicolson, Debra Sparrow, Brian Jungen, Shawn Hunt, Nicholas Galanin, and Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas. Their family histories and backgrounds may be diverse, but they are all engaged in reviving the agency of Indigenous art and extending its reach within Canadian and international art contexts. As this book goes to press, the Idle No More movement, a resurgence of the struggle against the political and ethical consequences of colonization, is bringing out the enormous creative vitality of Indigenous people in Canada and around the world. In realigning the aesthetic and the political, it is, once again, transforming the idea of Northwest Coast Native art.

NOTE

1 The Aboriginal right to harvest fish from traditional territories was upheld, along with a right to sell fish, though this is not an unrestricted commercial right, being limited to what is required for subsistence. In 2011, the Court of Appeal restricted the right to fish or harvest to species traditionally caught or harvested by the Nuu-chah-nulth. The trial court made no ruling on Aboriginal title, on the ground that it was not necessary to do so. Implementation will depend on negotiations with Canada and, as appropriate, British Columbia.

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