

BOOK REVIEWS

Clark, Karin and Jim Gilbert: *Northwest Coast Native Indian Art Curriculum*. Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Raven Publishing, 1987, ISBN -0-9692979-0-4, Illus., Abstract, Bibliog., 160 pp., spiral bound.

The Northwest Coast Native Indian Art Curriculum was researched and written by Karin Clark and Jim Gilbert to address a demand by Native people to preserve one aspect of their culture. It was decided that in order to get away from the artificial tourist art form, younger Natives on the Northwest Coast of British Columbia needed instruction in the technical skills comprising coast art.

The authors successfully combine the behavior theorist's developmental psychology with the methodology of learning experienced by Native people in the past. For teachers who are not experienced with the Native way of learning, this curriculum guide explains the relationship between seeing and doing, in terms which are familiar.

The book is self-instructional, making it easy for a teacher to modify lessons to students wants and needs. The introduction takes one through the reasons for this guide book, explaining that it began as a trial and error formula which eventually became a teaching model blending Native and other teachings to ensure the continuance of Northwest Coast art.

In teaching Northwest Coast art, the curriculum points to learning traditional skills ranging over such areas as making carving knives through designing and painting conventional designs which are steeped in history, to making utensils for decorative or functional uses.

The goals and objectives are stated to provide direction. The general goals for the child are divided into categories relating to the child himself/herself, to others, to the environment and to the world of ideas. The evaluation component of this curriculum guide is based upon clear and specific objectives. It would take too much space to list them here but suffice it to say that it is here that this curriculum guide differs from the usual. This guide lends itself to plain unadorned speaking, beautiful in its simplicity. It is a boon for teachers who do not have the time to sift through countless pages of documents in order to understand the general idea.

Included in the curriculum guide are evaluation questionnaires. They are rating scales for Teacher Program Evaluation, Parent/Guardian Evaluation, Teacher Self-Evaluation, Student Self Evaluation and Student Course Evaluation. These rating scales help pinpoint individual abilities, and are con-

tinuous and cumulative while promoting experimentation with new methods and ideas.

Chapter Four deals with teaching and learning the fifteen concepts of Northwest Coast art forms. This guide has been used in many varied learning situations. It has been used on a one to one basis, with a grade 4 Social Studies curriculum, with slow learners, with the gifted, and basically with any Native student who expressed a desire to learn about Native art. This curriculum guide is not restricted to Native students only. Enclosed diagrams can be used for coloring or as a springboard to individual representation in art classes.

I found this curriculum guide to be interesting and informative. It offers hope that traditional Northwest Coast Native art will survive and flourish.

Susan A. Hudson,
Box 471,
Fisher Branch, Manitoba,
Canada, R0C 0Z0.

Hail, B. A. and K.C. Duncan: *Out of the North: The Subarctic Collection of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology*. Brown University, Bristol, Rhode Island: Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology and University of Washington Press, 1989, 301 pp, 27 Colour plates and 256 Illus., Bibliography, 3 Maps.

How do people perceive materials which are placed on view in repositories called museums? Does the viewer look upon the items merely as quaint, or as a reminder of 'extinct' ways of life? Does the viewer look upon the item as an object of fine art only if it elicits sensations of enjoyment or merely representative craft of a group of people?

Some art historians have attempted to distinguish between what is 'art' and what is 'craft'. For instance, Douglas Fraser (1962:13) states "Only objects of paramount importance, generally associated with high spiritual value can be regarded as art; secular and utilitarian objects produced by slow and repetitive processes are classified as craft or lesser arts". He also indicates that art was only produced by men and that the women were the ones who did crafts. Other art historians make similar comments, while some art scholars have attempted to eliminate the dividing line between art and craft. Melville J. Herskovits (1948:380) stated in his definition "In the widest

sense...art is to be thought of as any embellishment of ordinary living that is associated with competence and has described form".

If we use the first definition, we are led to the disparaging conclusion that Indian men created art and women created mundane crafts. If we use the wider second definition then we begin to see that art permeated every aspect of life of Aboriginal people. We can see that women were as much a part of all aspects of life, both sacred and secular, as the men.

This volume - *Out of the North* - brings to the viewer/reader the materials collected by Emma Shaw Colcleugh, a teacher/journalist, who travelled throughout northern Canada at the close of the nineteenth century. The Colcleugh collections, supplemented by contemporary art collected by the authors during their own trips in 1985-87, were a part of a major exhibition held by the Haffenreffer Museum. This volume also shows that major portions of functional art were done by women rather than men.

The authors, Hail and Duncan, state that the priority for this volume is "to place Colcleugh's artifacts in a context more meaningful than one that simply lists, in catalogue entries, the name of the collector and the date of acquisition" (p.9).

The volume is divided into two major sections. The first section deals with background information regarding the region and the Aboriginal people who live in this vast area; a biography of Emma Shaw Colcleugh; and style changes, along with diffusion of materials, which affect Aboriginal art development and contemporary subarctic art. The second section is the catalogue which contains the 27 colour plates. The catalogue itself is divided into two parts, the Colcleugh collection and the contemporary collection.

Hail, in Chapter One (pp. 16-36), relates background information regarding the Aboriginal people of the region called the Subarctic. She presents preliminary information on the languages spoken, and the location of various Aboriginal nations, as well as the changing social and economic aspects of these nations. As this volume is mainly concerned with art, the author describes the changes which occurred in the art of these Aboriginal people from the late nineteenth century to the present. The chapter is well illustrated with archival photographs of the people of the region.

Chapter Two (pp. 37-64) is a brief biography of Emma Shaw Colcleugh which outlines her travels in Canada in [the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is during these travels that Emma began to buy materials made by Aboriginal people who live in the region. Hail gives a brief description in this chapter of the art collected (purchased) from Aboriginal people by Colcleugh and others.

Chapter Three (pp. 65-96), deals with changes which have occurred in Aboriginal art. Duncan describes how these changes occurred and were disseminated throughout Aboriginal territory by the introduction of 'new' technologies and 'new' materials (p.88). The reader gains a small insight into the use of the articles called octopus bags (which are more correctly called fire-bags) when she speaks of these: "Harry Sanderson...still kept his herbs and medicines in a beaded panel bag hung from his house rafters" (p.88) and "...abstract geometric symbols or representations of manitous or spirits, and were clearly sacred" (p.91).

Chapter Four (pp. 97-122) brings the reader into the contemporary setting by presenting a range of art still produced by the Aboriginal people in the same locale. The authors follow the same train of thought as many others by calling the products "crafts" (pp. 109, 113, 114, 115, 118) when they should be referring to them as "functional art". The authors do redeem themselves by stating that the work done by Aboriginal women is in fact a method for "reinforcing cultural and ethnic Identity" (p. 97). The chapter is excellent in describing the renaissance and continuation of Aboriginal people's art in Northern Canada.

The remainder of the volume (pp. 123-292) contains the descriptions of the art pieces on exhibit at the Haffenreffer Museum. These descriptions are accurate in their secular presentation of the articles, although there are brief hints of the spiritual significance of some of the pieces of art (pp. 204, 220, 235, 238, 291).

In conclusion, this volume presents exceptional documentation of the art produced by women in that region of Canada known as the Subarctic. It shows the reader changes which have occurred from the time Emma Shaw Colcleugh and others began to collect Aboriginal art in the late nineteenth century to the present. This volume will be an excellent addition to any class on Aboriginal women and more specifically the art of Aboriginal women.

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William Asikinack,
Department of Indian Studies,
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College,
Regina, Saskatchewan,
Canada, S4S 0A2.

Halpin, Marjorie M.: *Totem Poles: An illustrated Guide*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, UBC Museum of Anthropology, 1981, 64 pages, 5 colour/77 duotone illus., 1 map, ref., paper, ISBN 0-7748-0141-7, \$12.95.

Marjorie Halpin, Professor and Curator of Ethnology at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, has published a noteworthy guide to part of the museum's collection. This book provides a basic introduction to the totem poles produced by Indian peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast.

Halpin has focused her attention on the three linguistic divisions of Kwagiutl, Haida, and Tsimshian. Although the museum has a fine collection of Salish, Nootka, Tlingit and Bella Coola artifacts, they appear to have been largely omitted from her discussion.

The book is divided into three sections. The first part provides an overview of the cultural background of the coastal Indians. The writer has divided this into five subsections: wealth, family, mythology, ceremony and carving. She asserts that these five "basic patterns", found among all coastal peoples, gave rise to the practice of erecting totem poles. The section ends with a brief mention of socio-economic changes over the last two centuries which have affected the production of these sculptured poles.

The second section answers the question "What is a totem pole?" Different styles of "poles" such as the house frontal pole, memorial or commemorative poles, welcome figures, house posts, mortuary and grave markers, as well as the familiar totem pole, are discussed. The custom of potlatching and the existing evidence of when the first pole was erected is mentioned within this section.

Noted artists Robert Davidson and Douglas Cranmer, as well as the artists of 'Ksan, are pictured working on contemporary projects such as murals, sculpture, and doors, all of which maintain the well-known form and image of traditional coastal art. Haida artist Bill Reid is described as being a blend of Northwest Indian tradition and European culture. His sculpture, "The Raven and the First Men", is cited as testimony to the positive evolutionary change which this art form has undergone.

The last section lists three ways to examine totem poles critically. The skill of the artist is noted as the first point to consider. As with all handicrafts, variations in artistic quality effect the visual impact of the piece under examination. The recognition of imaginary or real life forms is another way to study totem poles. The dorsal fin of a killerwhale, the cross-hatched tail of the beaver and its large incisor teeth are examples of how to identify life forms on these carvings.

The identification of differences in style among various tribal groups is yet another way to enjoy this art form. Depth or shallowness of carving, the proportional size of the head and body of the image and the degree to which carved figures are horizontally separated, or overlap, on a pole are some clues used to identify the group or person responsible for the piece. These are just a few examples of the stylistic clues which Halpin suggests allow work to be identified with a particular cultural group or person.

The extensive use of photographs throughout the book is excellent. They have been carefully selected and clearly illustrate the points being made in the text. The inclusion of historical photographs gives the reader a feeling of strong tradition with respect to style and design in the totem pole carvings of yesterday and in modern sculpture.

As an introductory book for the layperson or a supplementary text for undergraduate courses in art history or anthropology, this publication is highly recommended. It is well written and has limited the use of technical terms. Professor Halpin has succeeded in introducing artistic as well as cultural theory in an informative and thought provoking manner. It is a superb publication.

Dev Yadav,
Alberta Vocational Centre,
Box 1280,
Slave Lake, Alberta,
Canada, T0G 2A0

Samuel, Cheryl: *The Chilkat Dancing Blanket*. Seattle, Washington: Pacific Search Press, 1982, ISBN 0-914718-69-x, Illus., Bibliog., Notes, Append., Maps, indices, xv + 234 pp., \$29.95, Cloth

In *The Chilkat Dancing Blanket*, Cheryl Samuel has interwoven mountain goat wool and cedar bark, legend, spirituality, and mathematically precise research to recreate the Chilkat Blanket in written form. By unravelling the Dancing Blanket with modern research methods as well as trial and error, Samuel has followed a similar technique used by the Tlingit women who lived along the coasts of Alaska and Northern British Columbia. These women weavers saw and admired the beautiful Dancing Blankets of the Tsimshian people and through painstaking unravelling and reweaving, they recreated "Nakheen" or the "great fringe about the body." By the late 1800s, the Dancing Blanket became known, through European traders, as the "Chilkat Blanket", produced in the greatest numbers by the Chilkat women who lived near what is now the Lynn Canal.

Throughout the book, there is a tone of respect and acknowledgement of the women who wove the blankets and of the Native culture they represent. The text is, in fact, dedicated to a very special weaver, known only by her signature; a woven closing specific to her Dancing Blankets.

There is a satisfying completeness to the whole volume. At the beginning of each section, there is a traditional legend and at the end, there is a "tie-off" or modern conclusion. Included are a great many enlarged diagrams, photographs of the Dancing Blanket in use, both in former times and in modern times.

In Part I, the origin and design of the Dancing Blanket are discussed. There are photographs and descriptions of the Dancing Blanket in use during ceremonies. Some vivid colour plates are also included. Part II tells about materials, spinning and dying; Part III tells about the Dancing Blanket's evolution and illustrates weaving techniques. Finally, in Part IV, the final step of weaving a Dancing Blanket is described with precise written directions, large illustrations, and clear photographs.

A very special part of the book, and one that transforms the ancient art of weaving the Dancing Blanket to modern living form, is the final section. This contains the appendices, notes, bibliography and index. A map showing the major tribes of the Northwest coast in Appendix I highlights the Chilkat Dancing Blanket weaving area. Modern dye recipes are described in Appendix II, including the process, measuring equipment, stock solutions, and dyecloth. In many parts of the volume, there is a gentle humour, as Samuel pokes fun both at herself and at fellow experimenters. In the ancient recipes, old urine is part of the process of dying. Samuel's description of eating the traditional diet of fish and berries for a month to make sure the urine had a proper chemical balance, followed by her description of boiling it in a modern indoor kitchen was truly funny. The final appendix contains colouring guidelines so that weavers who create their own designs using ovoids, u shapes, and headlike forms will know the accurate colours and shapes. The Notes section lists resource museums and their abbreviations, quotations, additional resources and sources. It is apparent from this section just how extensive the research was for the book. Particularly interesting was the exact chemical analysis of fibres that allowed a faithful recreation of the materials and dyes of the Dancing Blanket. Also included here is an analysis sheet of Chilkat weaving. Condensed onto one chart, Samuel has distilled the essence of the entire book. Experienced weavers will find this "weaver's shorthand" section most useful.

It is quite apparent that this volume has been very carefully designed. Not only is an ancient Native art and skill form preserved, but also intrepid modern explorers are given a chance to experience the form as well, True

to Native tradition, Samuel creates holistically, drawing in respect, tradition, and craftsmanship, and then adding the excitement of scientific discovery, by telling us how the closed, curved and rounded shapes are created on vertical and horizontal lines. The Chilkat Dancing Blanket assures us that the form, grace, and beauty of the Dancing Blanket - and the knowledge and skill of the women weavers of the Tlingit Nation - will not be lost. Their gift is now available to anyone who cares to read and discover.

Karin Clark,
556 Boleskine Road,
Victoria, British Columbia,
Canada, V8W 2R1