

THE RE-ENACTMENT OF A MYTH.
ART AS EDUCATOR OF THE ART-MAKER:
AN ENDURING ROLE IN HAIDA CULTURE.

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A Thesis

in

The Faculty of Arts
Department of Art Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of Masters of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Québec, Canada

June 1982

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ABSTRACT

THE RE-ENACTMENT OF A MYTH. ART AS EDUCATOR OF THE ART-MAKER: AN ENDURING ROLE IN HAIDA CULTURE.

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Mircea Eliade's insights into man's need for myth re-enactment as the injection of meaning into life activities provide a theoretical framework for the explanation of why art, as manifest in the created art object, has survived in the Haida Indian culture. The outcome of this thesis search is the discovery that one particular function of art--that of art as educator of the art-maker within the context of the Haida culture--has remained consistent in the culture through traditional and contemporary times. Using existing literature and informal interviews as the main resources, historical, artistic and educational contexts are set, and the changing roles of art are examined. An explanation of how art has functioned as an educator follows. The thesis concludes by exploring contemporary meanings of art in Haida culture.

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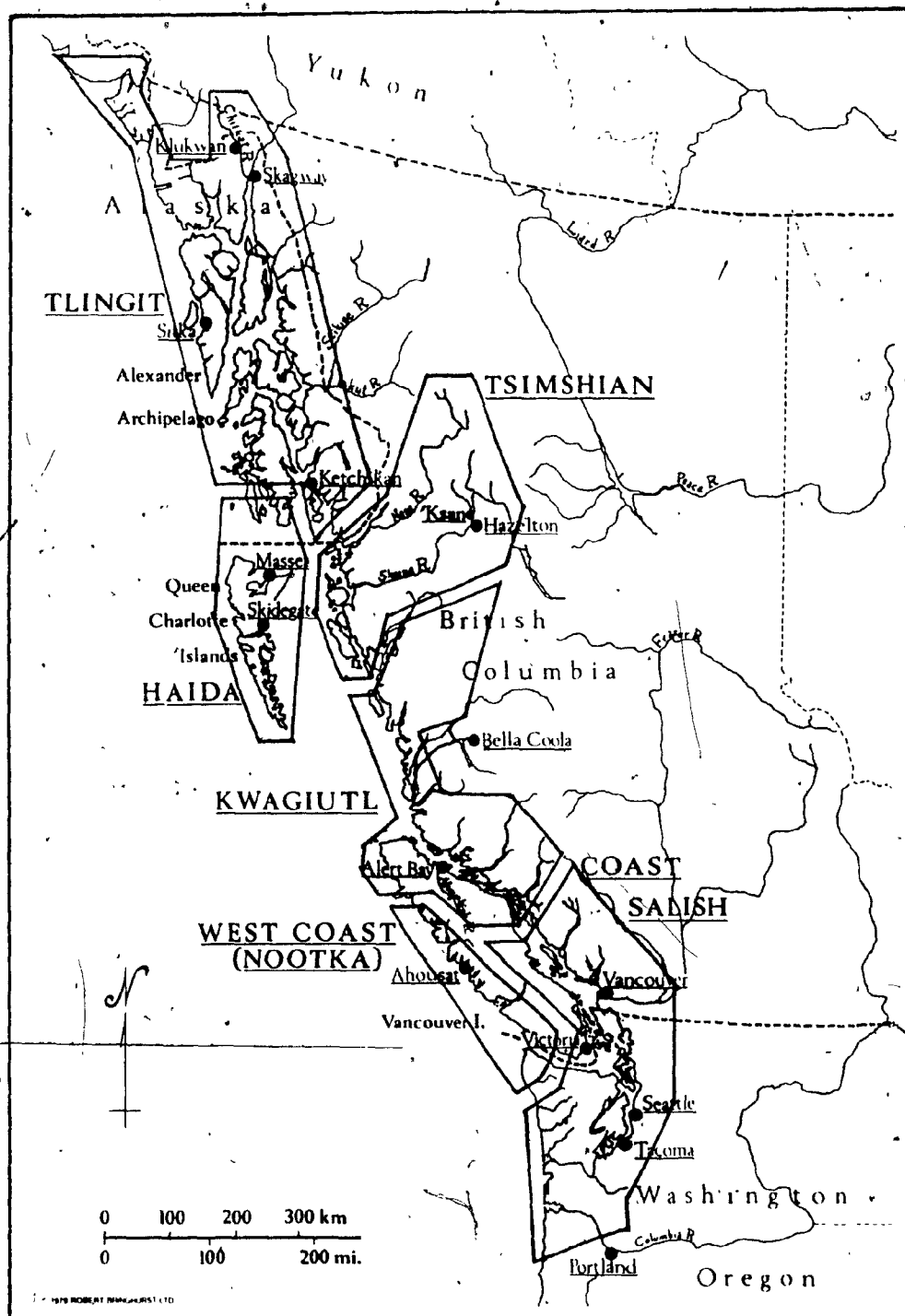


Figure 1. General location of the main Northwest Coast Indian groups. (Stewart, 1979, p. 13)

Chapter 1 Introduction

Raven, through magic, was born to the daughter of a great chief who possessed the moon and stars which he kept locked up in a box. In his disguise of a tiny human infant, Raven cried and cried until his "Grandfather" gave him the glowing ball of light to play with. Changing immediately into the sooty raven once more, he flew away through the smokehole carrying the moon in his beak. (Haida legend)

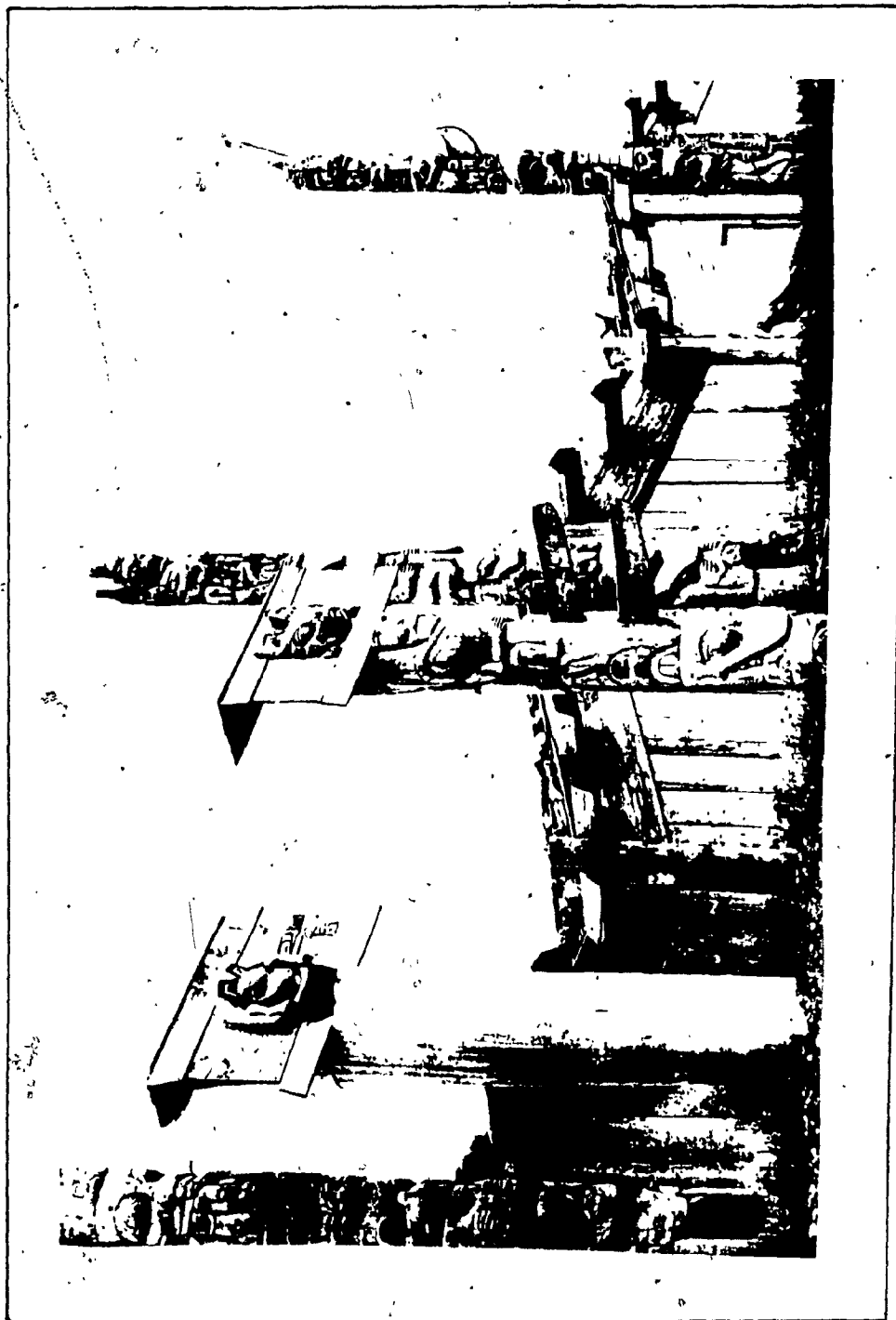


Figure 2. Skedans - Haida village, 1878. Photo: Dawson. (Smyly & Smyly, 1973, p. 87)



Figure 3. Skedans - Haida village, 1878. Photo:
Dawson. (Smyly & Smyly, 1973, p. 14)

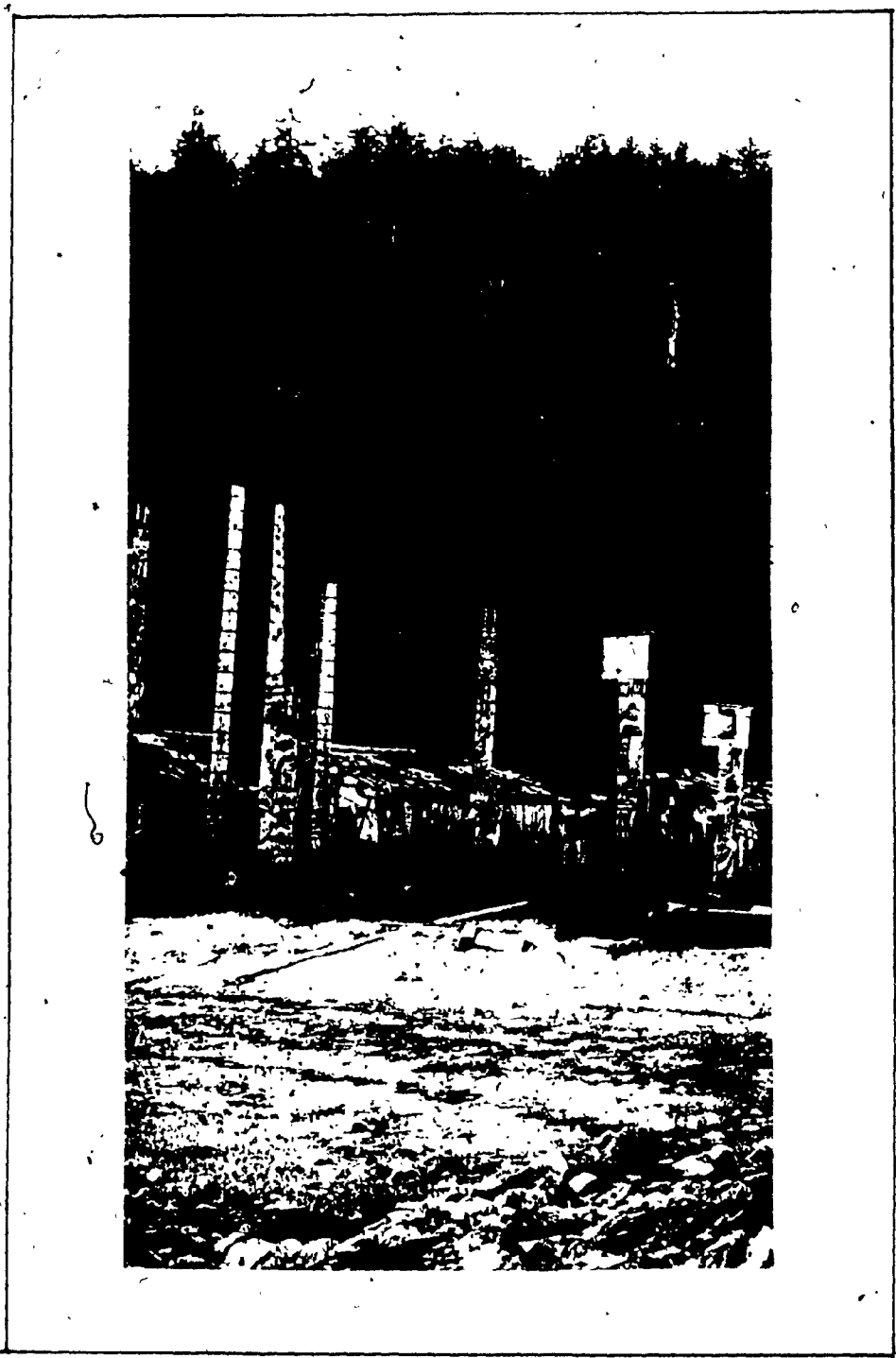


Figure 4. Skedans - Haida village, 1878. Photo: Dawson. (Smyly & Smyly, 1973, p. 34)

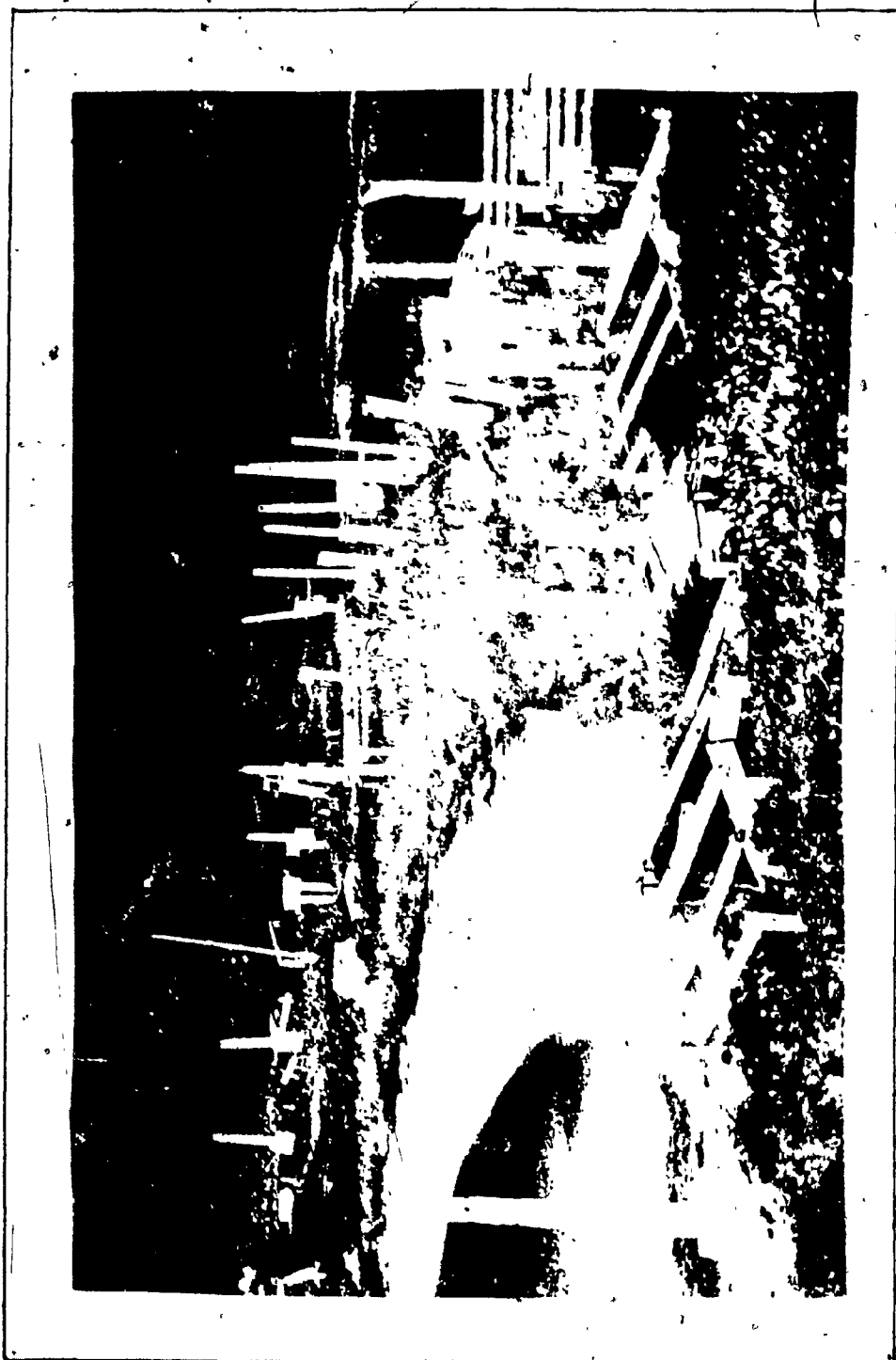


Figure 5. Skedaans - overgrown Haida village, 1897.
Photo: Newcombe. (Smyly & Smyly, 1973,
p. 85)

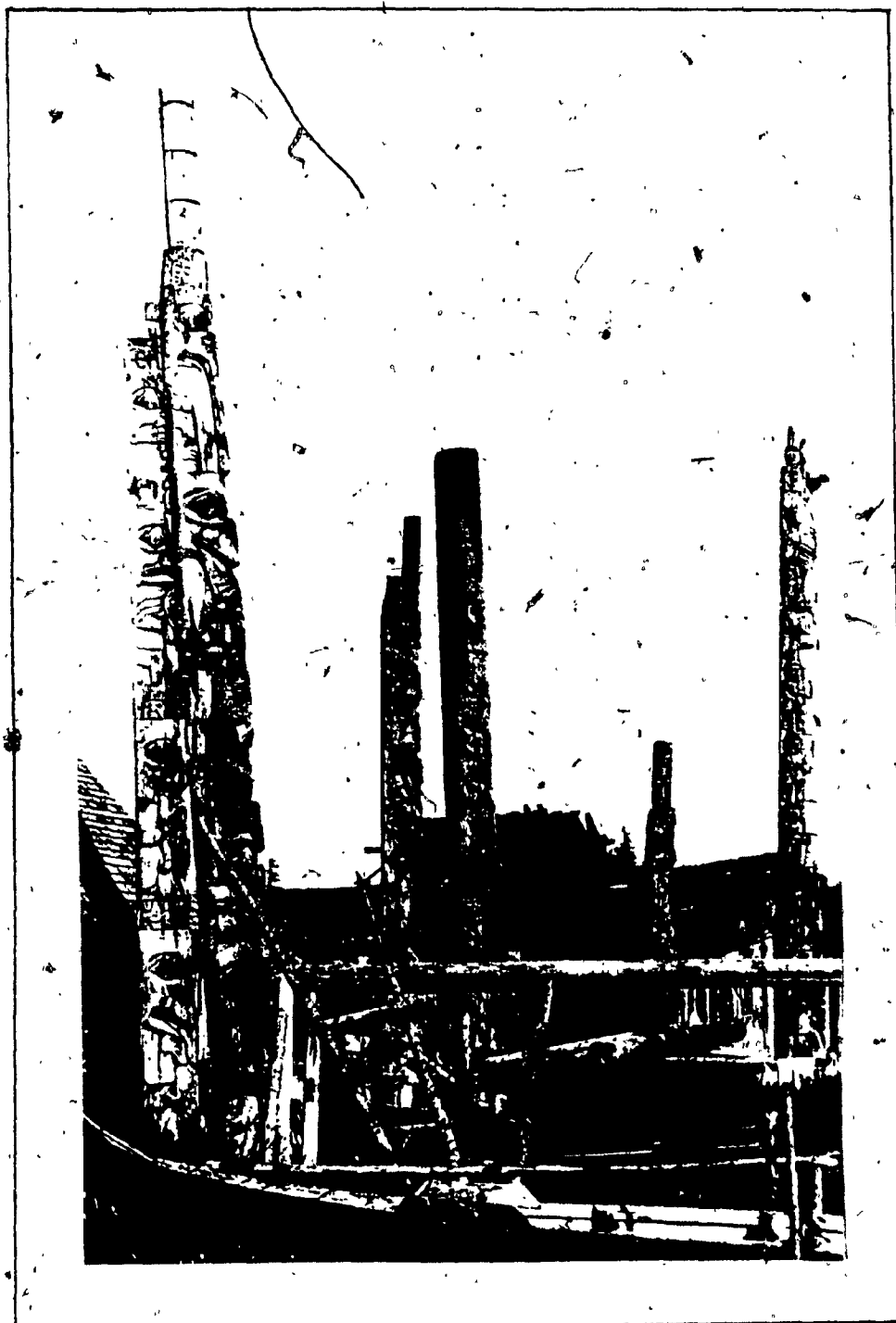


Figure 6. Masset - Haida village, c. 1880. (Gunn, 1967, p. 4)

Introduction. Myth is re-enacted in the art of the Haida. Their art embodies the mysteries and the truths, the transformations and the realities of "the people" (English translation for "Haida"). It educates the Haida art-maker in the content and meanings of his culture.

The search to understand the relationships between the Haida Indians, their culture, their education and their art began on the Queen Charlotte Islands, where there are today two communities of Haida people, Skidegate and Haida. Through casual conversations with members of the communities, it became apparent that art was a significant part of the Haida sensibility. Haida art had been through far-reaching transformations, but it remained and it had meaning.

The creative possibilities within the methodology of qualitative research have allowed for flexibility in the development of thinking. General inquiries were narrowed down to specific questions, which formed a framework for research, analysis and conclusion. A thesis topic concerning Haida art and education became clarified as new information and perspectives were discovered and processed.

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Thesis design emerged during the investigation and remained, within definite but broad parameters, in constant flux until research ceased. (Alexander, 1981, p. 38)

Initial exploration of material concerning Haida art and education led to the proposal to develop a curriculum for the public school system. All aspects of Haida art would be outlined and annotated. Recommended methodology for teaching would be consistent with the educational practises in the traditional Haida culture. These practises were essentially apprenticeship and example.

As the search continued it became increasingly obvious that the art of the Haida Indians was not simply a clearly defined set of artifacts stored in museums. It had gone through deep and numerous transformations and was still a significant and living cultural expression. The art object survived; but the role it played was different. The changing roles of art and their associated causalities began to be of interest. Were causes linked to Haida values concerning permanence and change?

In spite of a variety of roles and of causes, there seemed to be one function which remained consistent through traditional and contemporary times--that of art as educator, educator of the art-maker.

This role has been a continuous thread through the years, and has been significant enough to have fostered the survival and growth of Haida art. Mircea Eliade's insights into man's need for myth re-enactment as the injection of meaning into life activities provide the larger theoretical framework for understanding why any cultural expression survives.

The thesis sets the context of past and present Haida culture, education and art. Then it examines the changing roles of art, and the function of art as educator. The thesis concludes by exploring contemporary meanings of art in Haida culture.

Significance to art education. Researchers using qualitative research methods are "less concerned with the discovery of truth than with the creation of meaning" (Eisner, 1981, p. 7). They "try to locate the general in the particular. They attempt to shed light on what is unique in time and space while at the same time conveying insights that exceed the limits of the situation in which they emerge" (Eisner, 1981, p. 4). This examination of the changing role of art in Haida culture and its relation to education will inform on issues specific to the Haida people, but will also have ramifications for the art educational world in.

general.

The significance of the art object itself in the teaching of art, is a finding which cannot be ignored in classroom curriculum and practise. Prolonged inspection, copying and interpreting are methodologies for art teaching. And they revolve around the art object, not around the teacher. There is a shift of emphasis in the art-maker's focus.

The above speaks of an art educational approach; the following comments on the content of the art history, art criticism and art making components of an art educational program.

The Haida Indians of the Queen Charlotte Islands possess and continue to contribute to a rich artistic heritage. A study of their art is a necessary component of any complete Canadian (and particularly, British Columbian) art program. Objectives for the teaching of Indian art, laid out in People of Native Ancestry: A Resource Guide for the Intermediate Division (Wells, 1977, p. 16), suggest the necessary parts of a well-rounded art education program--the art forms themselves, the accompanying cultural values expressed therein and the roles these art forms play in native society:

1. An appreciation of the range of traditional and contempor-

ary cultural art forms developed by Canada's native people.

2. An understanding of the cultural values expressed through these art forms.
3. An understanding of the role of the cultural arts for different tribes and throughout different historical periods.
(Wells, 1977, p. 16)

This thesis, although dealing with goals 1. and 2., focusses on 3.--the role of art in the larger context of Haida culture--past and present.

Nature of the literature. The keywords for the gathering of resources (including literature, films, museum exhibits, conversations with informants and Haida artists) were "Haida art," "Haida education" or both. Only material explicit to these topics was examined. Although background reading regarding other art and/or education phenomena--in other nations of the world and in particular in other Northwest Coast Indian groups--was done, it is not necessarily discussed in the thesis. There is some discussion of Northwest Coast Indians in general (particularly in chapter 4) where there is direct application, either by contrast or parallel, to the Haida situation.

Literature which deals with art or education in the life of the Haida Indians is limited. Sources

listed in the bibliography constitute very nearly the sum total. There is even less literature which deals directly with the issue of the changing role of art in Haida culture. Art's role in traditional times is fairly well-documented in historical and anthropological literature. Art's transformation, however, and its newly assumed functions in contemporary times is virtually an untouched area of study. A noted exception is Carol Sheehan's book, Pipes That Won't Smoke; Coal That Won't Burn (1981), which traces argillite carving from its outset to the present day.

The literature which does exist tends to be simplistic, naive and popular. It often communicates one of two stances regarding Haida culture. One perspective suggests an ennobling and romantic vision of the quality and significance of native artistic expressions. Art and various regenerated cultural activities are acclaimed, often uncritically, as excellent and as seminal in the rebuilding of a distinct Haida identity. The other is a dark, pessimistic vision of the bastardization and fall of a nation, as illustrated in its art forms which, if produced at all, are now stripped of all meaning and created only to meet commercial demand. These stances are not neces-

sarily made explicit in the literature, but rather are implied.

This thesis attempts to be objective. It attempts to develop an honest perspective which has its roots in the realities of Haida culture and art, not in fanciful and/or negative visions of it. It is not a general summary of a massive survey of literature. It distills. It disregards the unsupported. It arises from contemplation of facts, analysis and interpretation of meaning.

Data, in the form of quotations and observations, was collected from three sources:

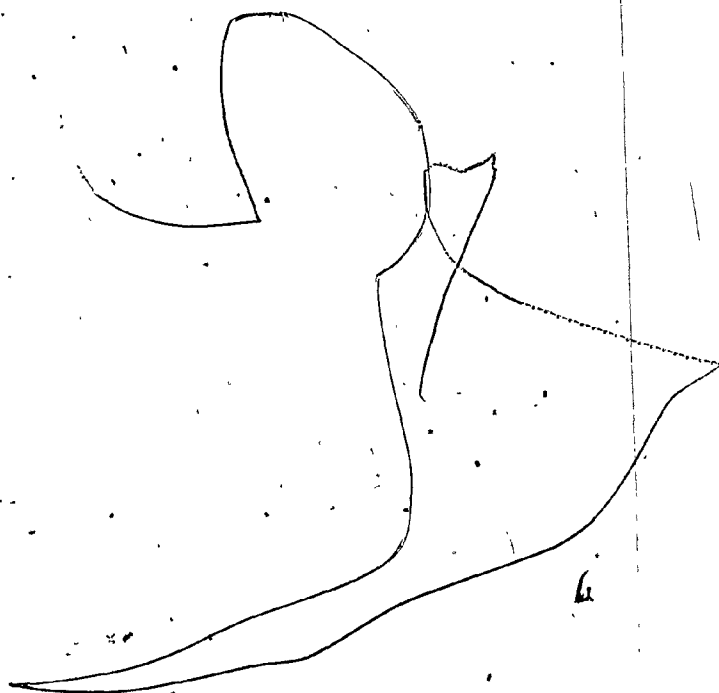
1. experiences and responses during visits to the Queen Charlotte Islands, and to several galleries and museums in Canada and the U.S.
2. existing literature (viz. books, periodicals, catalogs, files, newspapers) and films
3. informal interviews with artists and other members of the Haida culture, and with informants.

Underlining in the thesis has been added by the author. Myths recounted in the chapter prefaces were told by Haida Indians to John R. Swanton (Queen Charlotte Islands, 1900 - 1901) or to John and

Carolyn Smyly (Queen Charlotte Islands, 1950's
and 1960's), and are published in books entitled
Haida Legends (1976) and Those Born at Koona (1973).

Chapter 2

Present Haida Culture--and the Questions It Raises



A young man was driven away from his own home and married into a tribe of supernatural Eagles. He was able to become one of them by donning a suit of feathers with which he could fly. He became very fond of going out in his "suit" to hunt for whales, but one day he was captured by a sea-creature named Ah-seeak, with a head resembling that of a seal. This creature caught the young man and pulled him beneath the sea leaving only his upflung arm showing above the surface. One of the other eagles of the village, seeing the arm, took hold of it to pull him out but was in turn pulled under except for an arm. Before long, the entire village was strung out in this manner until the old Queen of the Eagles managed to break the spell and release them. (Haida legend)

Well, I guess the culture is dead, yeah. At least with us, the Haida. We were too quick to change. Now, this is why we don't have any dances and songs. Like the people down south here, they can still do their old dances and everything. (Langlois, 1976, p. 79)

The magnificent totem poles that once stood before our houses. They are still in my memory, yet within such a short time every symbol of our culture has tragically been lost. Today only one pole stands high to tell strangers that these are still the islands of the Eagle and the Raven. (Haida Chief Weha of Masset, Gunn, 1967, p. 2)

The pillage of time
and grotesque
the rotting stubs of ancient scrolls
await the darkened forest's march,
to wrap the shroud of history
about what still remains:
Man's art should never die like this.
(Hooper, 1969, p. 46)

To those who believe they are rekindling the flame of a culture and its art forms, one hears: "I look at what Robert Davidson is doing in the Charlottes, and all I see is a man engaged in a lament" (MacNair, 1973, p. 182).

It is believed, by those with a bleak outlook, whites and Haida alike, that all that remains of the Haida culture are carcasses of past greatness, memories and bitter grievances. Preserved and contemporary art works are simply props of a death watch (Peter MacNair)--carried on for a culture

that is buried forever.

Art, drama, music, myth and storytelling, dance and architecture were once integrated into a distinctive lifestyle. But presently these cultural expressions have either changed dramatically or been obliterated. Old purposes have died out. Mammoth totem poles are no longer carved. Community feasts and potlatches, that marked pole raisings and attendant public proclamations of individual social and spiritual advancement, are no longer celebrated.

What has survived? Art forms? A culture? Anything? Or do the Haida Indians float in a "de-cultured present--with no sense for the structures of interaction which can be observed in any society" (Adams, 1981, p. 382) and thus are left impotent in the creation of cultural expressions? Is all that remains a memory and a "deep sense of grievance" (Duff, 1965, p. 105)?

This "heritage of bitterness" (Duff, 1965, p. 105), this sense of loss, must be at least part of the inheritance of the modern Haida. But a receptivity to change and the ability to adapt are undeniable aspects of the Haida sensibility. Transformations are significant and valued. There must be another interpretation of the present state of Haida culture.

There is a more positive stance. It tends to romanticize. It emphasizes the wonder and uniqueness of the traditional past. It supports a belief in a widespread spirit of renaissance which inspires modern-day artists to produce an art rooted in the mythology and values of the Haida past but expressive of new visions and growth:

For Canada did at one time have a truly unique sense of cultural identity. Once a collective sense of place, a spiritual and emotional stability, and a truly comprehensible scheme of social patterns existed in our country. The world of the West Coast Canadian Indian flourished before colonialism to a point of sophistication and organization that could easily be compared in many ways with the singular cultural and artistic brilliance of such early civilizations as the Aztecs or Minoan greatness at Knossos. (Perry, 1978, p. 90)

Oh God! Like the Thunderbird of old I shall rise again out of the sea; I shall grab the instruments of the white man's success--his education, his skills, and with these new tools I shall build my race into the proudest segment of your society. Before I follow the great chiefs who have gone before us, Oh Canada! I shall see these things come to pass. (Wells, 1975, p. 2)

The Indians will undoubtedly remain a distinct ethnic group for many generations to come, living for the most part in separate communities with somewhat differ-

ent ways of life stemming from their distinct racial background, history and cultural heritage. There seems no reason why they should not attain equality in educational standards, occupations, and social life, and gain complete control over their own affairs. Their lives have changed drastically during the past century, and will have to change more, but they should always retain the right to find their own identity and develop their own lives as they wish within the framework of Canadian society. (Duff, 1965, p. 107)

Today the art is not dead and indeed there is a higher proportion of Indian artists per capita of population than in more sophisticated societies. (Gunn, 1967, p. 23)

I am confident that in the hands of our young artists we shall continue giving the world our unique form of art. (Haida Chief Weha of Masset, Gunn, 1967, p. 2)

This all-encompassing optimism is probed by skeptics:

Much of this is purely nostalgic, of course, a culture that lives in the "mind's eye," like Flaherty's Aran Islands, but in this case mostly in romantic museum exhibits and picture books. (Adams, 1981, p. 383)

Many Indians who have been successful in both cultures have offered their own artistic virtuosity as proof that Indians are "culturally" valuable. (Adams, 1981, p. 383)

They are reformulating a more positive identity for themselves, often by idealizing the old Indian ways in opposition to white values. (Adams, 1981, p. 383)

What is in fact the true picture? Neither extreme fills out the complexities and realities of Haida culture as it exists at present. There remains the fact that art forms are still being created in relative abundance (see chapters 7 and 8). There must be an explanation for their existence. Meanings are sought.

Mircea Eliade's understanding of the need in every culture for myth re-enactment in order that profane existence be imbued with meaning and transformed into the sacred, is the premise on which the existence of art forms can be explained. Cultural activities play their roles in the cycle of re-turning myths. It is through these myths that truth and meaning are passed down from generation to generation, that ancient mysteries are relived. Language and song give them a voice; dance gives them a movement; and art, a visual form.

Each of these acts "imitates an archetypal gesture or commemorates a mythical moment. In a word, it is a repetition, and consequently a reactualization, of illud tempus, "those days" (Eliade, 1949/

.1954, p. 28). According to Lévi-Strauss:

a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place in time, before the world was created, or in its final stages-- anyway, long ago. But what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future. (Langlois, 1976, p. 3)

Feldman echoes the belief that:

myths establish connections with the way our minds grasp reality ... Myths are truthful accounts of the way men have seen themselves and the world for most of their life on earth. They accurately explain a great deal about the way we think, feel and behave. (Feldman, 1967, p. 196)

Some may refuse to acknowledge the potential in the repetition of myth to establish meaning, but the native Indian intuitively knows its value.

White man:

seldom recognizes the limitations of his own point-of-view nor appreciates the essential mystery, and the recurring need to re-enact that mystery and give it voice, which lies at the heart of the other.

Something of the enormity of the imposition of the white man on West Coast Indian cultures can be gauged from the self-denigrating plaintiveness of an 1887 Cowichan appeal to Sir John A. MacDonald against the forbidding of the Potlatch and Tamanawas Dances:

'When our children grow up and are educated they perhaps will not wish to dance. Some only of us dance now, and we do not wish to teach others, but when one is seized with the ("Quellish") dance he cannot help himself and we believe would die unless he dance. On Saturdays and Sundays we will not dance as this offends the Christian Indians.' (Evans, 1973, p. xi)

The legislation was not revoked until 1951.

Old Paul, a Tsimshian chief in Hubert Evans' Mist on the River (1973), dies--because for him the myth is dead. If legend is lost, then all meaning in life is lost.

In a sense, what kills Old Paul is the knowledge that he cannot communicate the ancestral mysteries clearly to Cy's generation: "Look at my tongue, gone dead," he gasps, throwing himself against the cushions, like an animal fighting a trap." By contrast, what would kill the soul of that younger generation is a refusal to respond at all to the poetic truths of the legends that for centuries have enlivened their culture. (Evans, 1973, p. xi)

This story takes place in the 1960's among the Tsimshian nation in the Prince Rupert, B.C. area. And many other Indians of the Northwest Coast have been destroyed, sometimes through their own wilful neglect and sometimes through white man's political and educational impositions. They have been forced to forget, as their culture was stripped from them.

The Haida Indians of the Queen Charlotte Islands are not the least of the victims. However, is there a possibility that some myth has remained intact? Some myth has returned in art--that re-enacts the mysteries and truths of its people and educates them in meaning and value?

The following questions arise, as the framework for answering these queries:

1. Does there in fact exist a "Haida culture" today?

What phenomena play roles in maintaining or destroying the Haida culture? (egs. Education? Politics?)

2. What role does art play today?

How has its role changed?

3. Are there any art roles which have remained unchanged through the years--which indicate a continuity in the progression of Haida culture?

Chapter 3.

Past Haida Culture--and the Context
It Sets

• Kag'waai entered the bay of Skedans, came ashore, took off his magical halibut skin and hung it to dry on the limb of a tree. Falling asleep, he was awakened just in time to see an eagle stealing the precious skin from him, but as he made preparations to give chase, a voice from the forest called out, "Don't touch the eagle. Your grandfather lent you this skin. Now it is being taken from you." And the Strong-man became human once more. (Haida legend)

A brief description of early Haida culture will serve to set an historical context.

The Haida were one of several nations of people who lived on the northwest coast of North America. This area is now known as British Columbia and parts of the American coast. The other groups were, roughly from north to south, the Tlingit, the Tsimshian, the Kwagiutl, the West Coast (Nootka) and the Coast Salish (see Figure 1). The Haidas inhabited the Queen Charlotte Islands--which sit in the Pacific Ocean just south of what is now the Alaskan panhandle. They also inhabited a small portion of the land north of the Charlottes in early times, but at present are concentrated in the Queen Charlottes.

Nations "without crops are not supposed to have large, sedentary populations, ranked and stratified societies, massive architecture and elaborate art forms--as well as their undoubted flamboyance and vitality" (Fladmark, 1979, p. 45). But the Haida are an exception. Their unusually fertile natural surroundings facilitated the development of a culture which thoroughly integrated the arts into its lifestyle. The natural resources of the sea gave an abundance of food which could be secured and preserved in a relatively short period of time, and

the forest supplied much that was needed for construction of a material culture. Physical needs were met in a simple but adequate way. There were limitations to what land and sea provided (eg. carved totem poles decayed within 75 - 100 years in the mild, moist climate), but advantages enough, as well, in their provision of food stuffs, materials and leisure time, that an artistic civilization existed, if not thrived.

We may summarize our survey of the natural setting as follows: There were certain permissive factors in the environment that allowed cultural developments in certain aspects of native culture. Some of these--dependence on exploitation of marine resources, elaboration of canoe navigation, emphasis on wood-working--came to be distinctive of the areal culture. Some negative characteristics of the area, such as minor importance of land hunting, very rudimentary development of stone-working, and the like, are due to inhibiting factors of the natural scene which did not provide adequate materials. (Drucker, 1955, p. 9)

The Haida people were generally tall. The average height was 169 cm. They were second in height only to the Tlingits, in the north. They are said to have been proud and warlike--the vikings of the Pacific Coast, who canoed the waters of not only the Alaskan coast but as far south as the

Californian one. From their sturdy canoes, they traded and warred with their neighbors across the Straits and with each other.

There has always existed internal rivalry between the two clan divisions, the Eagles and the Ravens. In traditional times, every individual ranked in a status system. Each village had a chief, who was the highest ranking member of the lineage, and there were one or more house chiefs. The Eagles and the Ravens were each owners of particular crests, symbols and oral traditions. These hereditary emblems were believed to have been received by the ancestors in encounters with supernatural beings. The basic political unit was in fact a family unit-- a group of relatives, their spouses and children, who were politically autonomous. Kinship ties were ordered around matrilineal households or lineages and were "uneasy and unstable alliances of essentially independent kingroups and did not even have collective names other than those of the villages they shared" (Duff, 1965, p. 16).

In spite of earlier-mentioned aggressive characteristics, the Haida were a people who highly valued family relationships. A strong sense of identity and of belonging resulted. In light of the fact of loose kinship ties, this seems a para-

dox. But the Haida culture is, as is any culture, full of paradoxes.

A certain integration, a belief in the unity of all living things--man, animal, natural and supernatural--characterized the otherwise flexible belief system of the Haida. Spirits flowed from one host to another:

To call these beings supernatural slightly misinterprets the Indians' conception. They are a part of the natural order of the universe no less than man himself, whom they resemble in the possession of intelligence and emotions.
(Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1962, p. 37)

Transformations were arbitrary but consistent.

Ceremonials and secret rituals, mythology, art and beauty were as much a part of daily life as eating and working. Rather than the sciences, programming and mechanization being priorities, instead there were the arts, time, communication, the mystical, emotion.

Ceremonials were dramatic, and the accompanying stagecraft skilful. Masks were colorful and had movable parts. Carefully engineered tunnels and trap doors allowed performers to tease the audience with miraculous comings and goings. Hollow kelp stems laid under floors were the ventriloquist's answer to voice travel. This emphasis on the theatre of ceremony is understood by one source

to indicate a shallowness of spiritual and religious meanings. Wilson Duff compares the northern practices (which include the Haida) to the more southerly ones:

In former times the most prominent "religious" ceremonies of the Indians were the winter dances, though in fact these were partly religious ritual and partly secular stagecraft. The elaborate masked dances of the Kwagiutl and northern tribes were mostly stagecraft; few of the people believed that the dancers were really imbued with supernatural power, or that the masked figures were actually supernatural creatures. The fragments which have survived are purely stagecraft, their religious significance exists only in dimming memories. In sharp contrast, the Coast Salish spirit dances were intensely religious in nature, since each dancer had his own individual guardian spirit which possessed him during the dance. Some of the religious meaning has been lost as Indian life has changed but spirit dancing is still practised by many Coast Salish (and in a somewhat different form by some Interior Salish), and still provides them with experiences which are in the broad sense religious. (Duff, 1965, p. 100)

According to white observers and historians, some religious beliefs seemed to be vague and unsystematized, especially those regarding creation, cosmology and deities. The vagueness may have resulted from the fact that it seemed impossible to

halt the transformation process in order to clearly define an animal or deity. Other authorities attribute the looseness of northern beliefs to the fact that the Indians were in the process of acquiring some of the practises and performances during the historic period. Rights to some of these individual performances had only recently become hereditary property, and integration into lineage systems and crest-display dances was just as new.

Many taboos and practises were well-established in the Haida culture, however. Rites and observances at the time of hunting or fishing, or appeals to one's guardian spirit, were highly revered. Some animal spirits, such as salmon, eulachon, herring and wolf, were given particular respect because of their importance as Haida life supports. The salmon ceremony was of great import. The Haidas "performed it in more attenuated fashion than did their neighbors to the south" (Drucker, 1955, p. 156), but it was still significant, due most certainly to the dependence on the annual salmon run. There were rituals surrounding the birth of twins and its bad omen on the salmon season, the arrival of puberty for girls and boys, the burial of the dead in the niche of a mortuary pole and the removal of a dead body from the longhouse

(viz. the deceased was removed through a specially carved hole in the wall so that the "living would not have to follow the path of the dead as they passed in and out through the door" (Drucker, 1955, p. 156)).

The potlatch was the climax and epitome of Haida culture. This gift-giving and prestige-establishing ceremony was a celebration of rank and family, and a festival of the arts that sometimes lasted several days.

The potlatch reinforced Haida society's notions about its own organization and the cohesive relationship between the social and supernatural orders, thus providing continuity with the past. These winter ceremonials also served to introduce children and adolescents to the beliefs and workings of Haida society. The children were introduced to the community and their future rank and status publicly announced through the bestowing of new names and crest prerogatives. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 43)

The events:

often included a chief presenting his heirs and relations with ancestral titles, honours and rights. Each witness was "paid" for his acknowledgement according to his rank and clan affiliation. The gifts were usually amassed months before the feast and included objects and utensils from almost every aspect of the material culture: blankets, boxes and bowls, spoons, clothing, jewellery, and even ceremonial

paraphernalia. Each gift was appropriate to the status of the recipient and also established an obligatory debt payment to the host, at a subsequent feast. (Sheehan, 1981, pp. 42 - 43)

Haida mythology (see chapter prefaces) was rich but not rigid. Standard tales were passed down from generation to generation, but rarely without imaginative embellishments. Variations on a classic story line were numerous. The storyteller always had the right of creative interpretation in the outcome of events or description of characters.

The raven figure was one that consistently appeared in the mythology. He was both trickster and culture hero. He created mankind, not out of nothingness, but rather by transforming already existing phenomena. "He chances upon pre-existing things and coaxes them out of darkness and kaos into the light of the created world" (Vastokas, 1975, p. 16). The legends were flooded with incidents of transformation from animal to human, human to animal, spirit to human, human to spirit, animal to spirit, spirit to animal, man to natural force (egs. wind or fire), and natural force to man. Transformation was always regarded as a gift, as an ennobling experience, through which transfer of spiritual power took place. It was never final.

It was symbolic of the life process of change and renewal.

Here is a people whose legends help to serve as decoders in dealing with the "whys" of rapid and complete change within the culture. There is no pure Haida culture today. Deep beliefs towards permanence and change locked within the legends help to unlock mysteries concerning this lack of purity. As one attempts to understand the phenomenon, the terms "traditional" and "contemporary" become increasingly meaningless. This is a people who have been in a constant state of flux, who have taken on new identities and phased out old ones. The impact of white man has been vast and deep, but this process was likely accelerated by a receptivity to change and to the adoption of new ideas, that characterized the Haida perhaps more than any other Indian group in the Northwest. Explanations of Haida changeability do not justify white man's imposition; they simply shed some light on an understanding of its, at least partial, success.

As previously mentioned, lack of rigid systemization of beliefs and loose religious practises, were characteristic. Dances and ceremonies were less intense and dogmatic in nature than in other

Indian groups. Kinship ties were often vague. All of these cultural components were important to the Haida but were not necessarily firmly crystallized and clarified. The complexities of the Haida spirit are apparent.

Missionaries noted that the Indians seemed teachable and easily motivated to compliance:

By 1904, 90 percent of the Indians of the Province were nominally Christian ... in most areas Indian resistance to the remaking of their lives was weaker than might be expected.
(Duff, 1965, p. 87)

These qualities can be attributed to the priority that was placed on keeping up with the times, on keeping step with the prestigious white man, on adapting white man's ways and trading for his goods. (David R. Young, director of the Bent Box Gallery). "In an attempt to become strong and respected once again, the Haida turned their backs on the old ways which had been made to look foolish, and attempted to divert the current of their beliefs into European channels" (Smyly & Smyly, 1973, p. 27). The urge to maintain tradition, to preserve and to restore was not as strong as the ~~urge~~ pursue a new future. As old Indian philosophy poetically states:

The tree which stands too stiffly
against the wind is the first to
fall; the proud canoe wears thin
and splits apart. (Evans, 1973, p. 152)

There have been four major periods in the development of Haida culture:

1. Prehistory
2. Golden Age
3. Decline
4. Revival

The "look" and the functions of art often epitomize the conditions in any one historical period, so may be emphasized above other cultural activities.

In the Prehistory period, functional and aesthetic functions of art were totally integrated into everyday cultural and ceremonial life. What was useful, be it a halibut hook, a rattle, a storage box or a mortuary house, was also beautiful. "The idea of art for art's sake did not concern Indians; the necessity of making objects beautiful was directly related to their purpose, even though it did not increase their practical efficiency" (Hickman, 1975, p. 17). And even within the strict principles of artistic and symbolic heritage, individual artists experienced a degree of freedom in personal expression.

The Golden Age (Wilson Duff, 1965, p. 59) received its impetus from initial contacts with Russian and European traders. The Russian Dane Vitus Bering sailed hastily away from the Queen

Charlottes in 1741 after an Indian attack. In 1774 the Spaniard, Juan Perez, accomplished some trading. The first significant contact, which led to the establishment of more consistent trading, was made by Captain James Cook in 1778. During the ensuing years the:

arts and crafts, trade and technology, social and ceremonial life were all brought to new peaks of development. The climax of Indian culture was reached well after the arrival of the white man on the scene. (Duff, 1965, p. 57)

Injected into a culture, whose social hierarchy was based on the exchange of material wealth, were new and technically more advanced objects and tools. The "artistic tradition was so ingrained into the culture that it immediately adopted new materials and tools to its own well-stylized principles, rather than being changed by them" (Vanderwall, 1972, p. 50). Pelts "worth a king's ransom in China [were traded] for a few barrels of adze blades, roughly-made knives, and cheap glass beads given in exchange" (Drucker, 1955, pp. 29 - 30). More efficient, durable metal tools enabled carvers to greatly increase their output. Some records indicate that the very large totem poles were never carved until the second half of the 19th century, well after the arrival of the Europeans

and their iron tools (Gunn, 1967, p. 6).

Potlatching and ceremonial activity increased. For "their more frequent feasts and ceremonies, the chiefs needed more carved headdresses, masks, costumes, staffs, feast dishes, spoons, and many other things, and they kept the artists busy producing them" (Duff, 1965, p. 59).

To denounce the craftsmen's use of store paint or factory-made buttons as degenerate or unauthentic is to miss the main point: that the mind of the craftsman concentrated on invention and improvement and was quick to seize on any material that added to the effect he was striving to create. It is probable that borrowing, adaptation and invention went on throughout the development of Northwest Coast style. (Hawthorn, 1976, p. 23)

But for all that culture contact had actually stimulated some of the greatest art forms of these people, the totem poles made with sharp imported steel tools, the capes of red and blue felt trade cloth embroidered with mother-of-pearl shirt buttons, and the small sculptures and plates of oiled shale (argillite) were frankly made for sailors and missionaries. (Gunther, 1969, p. 105)

Trading arrangements became settlement patterns, and as white man's interest in purchasing native art had its beginning, commercial demand, rather than the native sensibility, began to shape the

art form. To the detriment of artistic integrity and creativity, Haidas complied with the dictatorship of the sale. They catered to the public appetite for traditional crafts and made, for example, argillite bowls and pipes, not for Indian use but for barter with Europeans. The Golden Age melted into Decline.

Argillite, the dark grey slate found on the Queen Charlottes, was used as the medium for tourist carvings. These carvings were the first forms made entirely for the curio trade. Initially, carvers drew heavily from Haida art and mythology for their designs, but white man's motifs quickly transplanted Haida animal and human designs. The "rigid rules and careful apprenticeship of former years [were] relaxed. Subjects were chosen for artistic appeal without any reference to their original purpose, and the careful precise form lines of the old style of carving became loose approximations" (Smyly & Smyly, 1973, p. 27).

"Form and Freedom," an exhibition organized by the Institute for the Arts at the University in Houston, and shown at the Art Gallery of Ontario from late January to mid-March in 1977, displayed some of the traces of decline:

Unquestionably the collection was full of challenges--

both visual and intellectual--for the casual viewer and the scholar alike. There were some obvious masterworks, for example, a Salish spindle whorl, a sheep's horn ladle shaped like a crane, a delicate yet intricately carved comb, a superb wolf mask dating from the early twentieth century, and several outstanding rattles . . . including the ubiquitous and culturally significant raven rattles. But by no means all of the works were masterpieces. Indeed, many of the pieces showed signs of careless workmanship, while others seemed impoverished by a lack of involvement in the culture. Also, the influence of the non-native market and aesthetic taste untutored in the subtleties of this art and culture were evident in several of the numerous post-contact pieces in the show. Many of these works are probably best described as souvenirs, for they seem to have been designed to appeal to the non-natives more than to compete with the best works produced in the culture. (Carpenter, 1977, p. 25)

As Haida culture, with its associated lifestyles and ceremonies, was stamped out, former reasons for making art also disappeared. Traditional art expressions ceased to exist because original functions were gone. Legal prohibition of the potlatch took place in 1884.

With the passing of potlatches and winter ceremonies went the oratory, songs, dances, and costumes that formed a part of them. Masks and other para-

phernalia were no longer needed. With crests out of fashion, there was no more reason for making totem poles. (Duff, 1965, pp. 102 - 103)

The habit of carving during the winter months did not die easily. But by the 1900's [other sources quote the 1880's - Gunn, 1967, p. 6], without the support of traditional beliefs, the large totem monuments were no longer being produced, and some were actually destroyed for firewood. One generation passed, and the techniques of designing and carving the enormous figures were lost. (Smyly & Smyly, 1973, p. 27)

The availability of wealth mocked ancient Haida modes of established rank by inheritance. It created new opportunities for social mobility.

Lower ranking Haida gained easy access to material goods and were able to "compete with traditional superiors by hosting public displays and dispersal of wealth to validate claims to positions of high rank" (Sheehan, 1981, p. 50). Confusion of identities and hierarchies resulted.

Not only did the entire social fibre of the culture break down, taking with it morale, dignity, and a sense of order and authority, but disease hit as well, reducing the Haida population in 1915 from about 6,000 to under 600. All villages except Haida and Skidegate were abandoned by the 1890's. Small-

pox was the major offender, a lethal plague among people who had no immunity to its attack. Other Northwest Coast Indian groups lost a lower ratio of their population, but even 1/3 is a devastating proportion. By 1929, an estimated 70,000 Indians were reduced to under 22,000. "The Indians, confused and sick, were no match for the men of massive courage and faith, massive theologies, and massive churches who brought them Christianity. Humanitarianism is a British virtue, but it came to the Indians cloaked in the guise of unduly severe suppression of established customs" (Duff, 1965, p. 75). Thus marked the virtual death of the Haida culture and its artistic expressions.

Just as Haida art was rotting into the earth from which it came, it began to spring up again-- as would new growth sprouting from a decaying nurse tree. It had assumed new functions, new expressions and new materials, but its roots were still deep in the Haida past. Growth was tentative at first, but slowly it regained momentum.

Haida artists began to carve models of "totem poles," decorated boxes, and feast dishes, in slate, and by the 1880's the ancient style dominated the slate carving to the point where the specimens of purely classic type and of considerable merit were being produced ... In other words, the

basic tenets of the style were strong enough to dominate the introduced complex, in which a new material [slate] was first used to copy new forms [pipes and scrimshaw] for a new purpose [for sale as curios], suggesting that the native art was firmly rooted in, and thoroughly harmonious with, the native culture. (Drucker, 1955, p. 180)

(Note that this quote, by mentioning 1880, indicates an overlapping of the chronological progression of periods. This occurs, of course, in any development or movement.)

Artistic creation did not restrict itself only to argillite. Silverwork, wood-carving, jewelry and print-making were revived or discovered. Personal and aesthetic purposes were motivators. The artistic impulse was powerful in spite of the odds of circumstance. Public awareness, originating largely from the foresight of a few New York artists and thinkers, and a resulting, growing commercial demand also catalyzed revival. Commercial demand, this time around, was not for souvenirs, but reflected a genuine appreciation for authentic, traditional forms:

By the early 20th century the art was finished. And its remnants lay unnoticed until the 1940's when Max Ernst, André Breton and other European surrealist artists-in-exile in New

York and friends such as anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss were attracted by its visual puns and playfulness. They began buying it and prompted the art's first gallery show in New York in 1946. By the 1950's U.B.C. had commissioned Kwagiutl carver Mungo Martin to create poles at the campus and by 1959 Reid had quit the C.B.C. to devote his time to researching amidst the 115,00 or so pieces of art in public hands. With the 1968 opening of The School of Indian Art at 'Ksan in North Central B.C. and the introduction of printmaking in the early 1970's, native art began to flourish with the slow relearning of the old potlatch forms and skilful marketing to meet expanding consumer demands. (Hopkins, 1980, pp. 58, 60)

Haida art was christened into the modern world.

It was becoming a symbol of cultural and artistic renewal. It was never to be quite the same, but it would always retain its authenticity and its origins.

Chapter 4.

Focussing on Education

A young woman was picking berries in the mountain-side with her companions, and instead of singing to warn the bears of her presence, she fell to mocking and jeering at the bears for their droppings, into which she had stepped. She then became separated from her companions, and while making her way home alone, met a handsome young man who accompanied her. He led her to his village where it became apparent that he was a grizzly bear in human form, and had kidnapped her to make her account for the rude things she had been saying. The young woman eventually married the grizzly bear and had two children by him, becoming part bear herself.
(Haida legend)

Art seems to have been a survivor in a culture which has undergone drastic change. But why? Are there other phenomena that have played a role in its historical continuity and development? What role has education played?

Education was an integral part of traditional Haida life. Through observation of and participation in daily activities, learning took place. "Schooling, that is the separating of children from adults for set periods each day in order that they may be formally instructed, was unknown amongst the Indians, but education was not" (Ashworth, 1979, p. 5). Haida children absorbed an understanding of the structure of their society and their role within it by attending:

various ceremonies, by hearing over and over again the songs and stories passed down from generation to generation, by listening to the speeches of the elders whose years had brought wisdom, and by participating in games which have always been the great teachers of the head, the heart, and the body. Spiritual and moral values were absorbed through myths which illustrated vividly for the children those actions which would bring honour and those which would bring dishonour [see bear-mother legend in preface to this chapter]. Children who misbehaved were not disciplined

by corporeal punishment for it was felt that doing violence to children did not help them to learn self-control; rather, a look, a gesture or a word was used to indicate displeasure

... Although the system was entirely informal and varied from tribe to tribe or location to location, it had one great factor going for it--it worked. ... This education-for-a-purpose enabled the child gradually to become a functioning, contributing part of his society. Since all of the social institutions of his society were intact, he was able to become part of and relate to a stable social system. His identity was never a problem. His education had fitted him to his society; he knew who he was and how he related to the world and the people about him. (Ashworth, 1979, pp. 6 - 7)

Apprenticeship and learning by example kept the arts alive from generation to generation, as techniques and aesthetic sensibilities were passed down from the old to the young. Learning took time, it took watching, it took quietness of spirit, it took years of practice and experience. In Hubert Evan's novel, a canoe carver cries out against a younger generation Indian who disdains the disciplines, the skills and the qualities of his art:

The young cedar! What did ones like that know, what were they capable of knowing, of the discipline and brooding which went into the shaping of a good canoe? No patterns or white man's

measurements as at the cannery boat shed, only your eye and the feel of the wood under your hand, while the tender strength came out of the log and lay before you. For weeks you worked on your knees, inside and out, chipping to thickness, not quite a thumb's breadth along the midship gunwale and slightly thicker toward the bilge and across the flattened bottom, chipping and feeling and chipping again, making the wood give itself to you, coldly watching yet loving too, as you gauged the force and direction of every blow, the life going out from you and into the thing you fashioned, the old life drained away and spent forever, but nothing careless and nothing, no part of you, withheld. (Evans, 1973, p. 239)

White man's system of education, imposed upon the Haida by missionaries and/or governments, was unfamiliar, confusing and often functioned to deny the Haida access to his own culture. It often took the form of a day or residential school. Mary Jane Sterling, a member of the Thompson River (Nteakapamuk) Indian band, expresses sentiments which would have been common to all Indians in this situation.

Thoughts on Silence

What am I doing here
Among these strange people
Sitting in these funny desks
Staring at this paper?
On yes, I am in school.
These people are my classmates.
Though they chatter all the time
They are silent now.
Now I can think.

I see a bird flying high in the air.
 Maybe it is flying south.
 My heart leaps with the bird
 Taking a message to my mother.
 My mind is heavy, thinking something sad has
 Happened at home.
 But the birds are singing
 Everything is all right.
 The breeze has whispered something in my ear.
 I hope it whispers the same joyous words to
 my people.
 I get lonely for my family and I especially
 miss my mother
 But I shall see them all soon.

When we meet we won't even touch hands
 But our hearts will leap with joy
 And in our minds we will be glad.
 (Ashworth, 1979, p. 24)

George Manuel, another Indian, recalls his own experience in the school system:

Our values were as confused and warped as our skills. The priests had taught us to respect them by whipping us until we did what we were told. Now we would not move unless we were threatened with a whip. We came home to relatives who had never struck a child in their lives. These people, our mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles and grandparents, failed to represent themselves as a threat, when that was the only thing we had been taught to understand. Worse than that, they spoke an uncivilized and savage language and were filled with superstitions. After a year spent learning to see and hear only what the priests and brothers wanted you to see and hear, even the people we loved came to look ugly. (Ashworth, 1979, p. 22)

Natives were forbidden to practise their own culture but not allowed contact with the white

world either. Education for Indians is understood by Hubert Evans to have been "brimful of careful (though often incomprehensible) religious training and boy scout activities but to [have offered] no opportunities either for learning Western technology or for preserving Indian culture" (Evans, 1973, p. xii). Fr. E. C. Bellot, O.M.I., of the Squamish Mission School, is quoted as making the following entry in the St. Paul's Annual and Reference Book for 1937:

Only a generation has elapsed and from an ignorant and wild tribe, we find one educated and speaking English better than they speak their own language. Not forty years ago, when first their school was opened, not a child spoke a word of English; today the only language you hear among them (exception made for the old people) is English. Many among the rising generation do not even know their own language. This great change has been wrought through the Squamish Indian School. All honour and praise to its able and devoted teachers. (Ashworth, 1979, p. 28)

Such a clearly proclaimed message of cultural suppression!

The Indian people were left stranded on an island between two cultures. A report by George Caldwell, in his article entitled "An island between two cultures: the residential Indian school," concludes that:

the residential school system itself was the major factor in the lower levels of adaption and adjustment of Indian children. The emphasis of the schools was on an academic classroom program and the total needs of the child were not being met. The negatives of a high degree of regimentation, lack of individualization in the program, and poor liaison with the parents, created an artificial environment for the Indian child in which the residential school was an island not related to the community to which he would be going. (Caldwell, 1976, p. 14)

Identities became confused and torn among those infected by white man's educational system. In the search for a new personal identity, rather than accepting a traditional one, Indians began to shake off the vestiges of their past. An old Indian woman, Melissa, broods over her children:

The life here had not changed, only her children had changed. The content remained, the strong, sure discipline of seasons, the authorities worn smooth by long obedience, the regulated comings and goings, but her childrens' heads were filled with all new things. They saw restrictions where she saw protection; they resisted where she complied, and felt the safer for it. Yet this was spoken of as education! It held up enticements beyond their grasp, offering them the moon, but at the price of the authenticities which were before schools were. (Evans, 1973, p. x)

Mixed up in Melissa's mind are the paternalism of the reservation

system and the ritual pattern of the traditional culture; her children, reacting against one, find it hard to separate it from the other, and are in danger of losing their entire heritage in the course of seeking their identity. (Evans, 1973, p. xi)

Dot, a younger relation, chastises Melissa for wanting to protect her children from modern educational influences:

You don't help them fit in, that's for sure. But please, Melissa, don't get sore. How about seeing it my way for a change. You take June and Cy. At school they hear some teacher telling them they've got to have good English. And what do they get at home? Gitk-shan--and nothing but. At school they're taught about a whole world you old folks don't even know exists, and between the two they're pulled first one way and then the other. Like me. I was pretty bright in school, if I do say so myself. I had a teacher getting me all steamed up about getting out in the world and making good. (Evans, 1973, p. 45)

The dilemma of a decultured people, a people in transition, was created. Where is the blame to be placed? Perhaps there is no need to place it. Certainly there are no easy answers. A quietly resigned Indian muses in Hubert Evans' novel, "for in the end nobody was to blame; it was all part of being Indian" (1973, p. 45).

In the mid-1960's the Indian Affairs Branch was formed (June, 1966), and represented the assumption of some degree of native control over the educational situation. In an "Annual Report, Department of Citizenship and Immigration" (Duff, 1965, p. 73), it was reported that the Indian Affairs Branch maintained 70 day schools or reserves in B.C. and supported or maintained 11 residential schools. The development of integrated schools was noted. The Branch was entering into agreements with local school boards so that Indian children could attend regular provincial schools. The number of Indian children attending schools was increasing. A new awareness of the necessity for native control of their own education led to the publication of such statements as:

Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being.
(Ashworth, 1979, p. i)

The issue of assimilation vs. integration was raised. A genuine concern was expressed for the preservation and/or rediscovery of a culture largely disappeared:

Will the answer be assimilation or integration? We cannot say, because the process of change has

not yet run its course. What we see in Indian life today is not the old cultures in slightly modified forms, and it is not a carbon copy of the white man's culture. Nor has it settled into an equilibrium as a somewhat different sub-culture, which is what it might become. In technology and economic life a few vestiges of the old forms persist where these are useful, but by and large the Indians are adopting the new forms as rapidly as circumstances permit. In social life the old forms are also disappearing. Some traces remain in such things as the Coast Indians' love of sociability, respect for kinship ties, and talent for speech-making, and some old patterns take on new vitality in the new situation, such as canoe races and spirit dance gatherings. In religion there is on the surface a willing acceptance of Christianity; below the surface a few old forms such as shamanism and spirit dancing persist, but these are not considered "religion." The need for political institutions has arisen from the need to exercise some control over their own destinies in the new circumstances, and new political structures are evolving: a government-sponsored system of bands and agencies, and a spontaneous growth of tribal and inter-tribal brotherhoods. (Duff, 1965, p. 76)

A program called N.I.T.E.P. (Native Indian Teacher Education Program) was developed through U.B.C. to train native teachers to teach among their own people. It continues to operate successfully today.

The following philosophies and objectives,

published by Indians in The Education Canada Journal, 1976, illustrate progress in establishing rights and goals in native education:

We believe in obtaining an education that respects and enhances our identity, permitting us to retain those aspects of our culture which are meaningful to us, while at the same time, learning the culture of the dominant society from which we can choose those aspects essential for adequate functioning in the modern world. We believe in education as a preparation for total living and as a means of providing us with a free choice of where to live and work. We believe the education system must be designed to meet the needs of the total community by including offerings to people of all ages. Our philosophy embraces the concept of Indian control of Indian education. We believe:

Education should be controlled by the community it serves.

Education is most effective if it involves the community in the educational process.

Education is most effective if it utilizes the concept of cultural relevance to further its academic needs.

Education must encompass traditional patterns of learning which emphasize: independence, self-reliance, observation, discovery, practicality (empirical), and respect for nature.

Education is progressive and not regressive, therefore, failure should be virtually unknown.

Our philosophy is recognized as a broad framework into which we incorporate the following general goals:

1. To have more Indian people working in all aspects of the education system.
 2. To utilize the community and its people as resources to the fullest extent possible.
 3. To provide programming as identified by the community to people of all ages.
 4. To employ only staff that is sensitive to the philosophy of Indian education.
 5. To provide a curriculum and materials that will develop and nurture a positive self-image of the learner as an individual and as a member of the Indian race.
- (Kirkness, 1976, p. 33)

It is obvious that maintenance of the Haida culture, or encouragement of new cultural expressions within it, had not occurred through white man's educational system. However, with the advent of more recent native control, some improvements are being made in this regard. Is education completely inadequate to the task of allowing the Haida culture to exist? Is there a component in education that could complement and assist its growth, rather than destroy it?

J. K. McFee suggests that art is that component. Art is a major form of enculturation and education, and should be allowed to flourish within

all cultures. She discusses the Balinese culture in which:

Art is one of the major forms of enculturation, the learning by a child of his culture, including:

1. the concepts of reality
2. the cultural heroes
3. acceptable behavior
4. history
5. sex roles
6. the whole pattern of behavior of his group

(McFee, 1961, p. 30)

Without verbal and visual means of sharing these ideas, cultures could not evolve. While there are nonliterate societies (those without a written language), there are no societies that are without art forms, however primitive, for communicating ideas.

(McFee, 1961, p. 18)

To maintain a culture without art forms would be difficult. To educate children in the cultural pattern without the help of art objects that symbolize ideas and values would be even more difficult.

(McFee, 1961, p. 27)

R. Degge believes that art has a highly significant role to play within a culture and its educational system. She sees "art as part of the foundation of the educational program needed by every child"

(McFee, 1961, p. 19).

With this introduction to the value of art in culture and art in education, application can be made to the Haida situation. The Haida are a peo-

ple for whom art played an important role in everyday life (see chapter 6). Any educational system which does not take this into consideration alienates itself from the community it attempts to reach. "Any school which is divorced from the cultural stream of the community into which it operates, or which is not partly an activity controlled by this community, is artificial" (Hawthorn, 1967, p. 94). The contemplation and making of native art was denied the Haida in early schooling by the white man. However, somehow art has survived.

How?

Survival has not been a result of the man-made educational system. Has art itself been the educator?

Chapter 5

Focussing on Art and Its Changing Roles

Now Sacred One Both Still and Moving had been in the water a long time, when something else touched him. He reached for it and felt nothing. The same thing happened again. Each time he reached farther and farther away. His hand touched something and slipped off. Then he took hold of it with both hands. It pulled him out of Skidegate Inlet. He tried to let go as they were passing by the abandoned village, but suddenly something happened; there was a loud sound, as if the island had broken off its stem, and he lifted up this beautiful transparent thing, and put it around his head. It was like the hair of one who tests the supernatural powers of a man ...

Art is an irrepressible, and essential aspect of the Haida sensibility (see Ted Bellis' comments on creativity in chapter 7). Although many cultural manifestations, such as the potlatch and the dance, have all but disappeared, the artistic impulse and its resulting forms have remained. They have even served as channels through which the Haida have gone back to discover the old ways, the beliefs, mythologies and expressions of their forefathers.

A closer look at art and its relation to the Haida sensibility brings one to an understanding of what a significant part of the Haida lifestyle art has always been. Wilson Duff, who was a prominent researcher of the Haida culture, maintained that the Haidas were "the most maritime and the most intensely artistic" (Duff, 1965, p. 31) of all the Northwest Coast groups. "They were a people of high culture, with a passion for making their social and religious worlds visible through plastic and graphic arts" (Sheehan, 1981, p. 31).

Many of art's roles have changed over the years, because art and culture are always in the process of transformation. But there remain threads of commonality, characteristics of art which run through both past and present times.

The Haida spirit. A "civilizing and human-

izing spirit of self-discipline in the face of tremendous energy, a love of structure and order over arbitrary waywardness and release, and a passion for elegance, precision and refinement" (Vastokas, 1975, p. 15). It inhabits all Haida art--traditional or contemporary. Cool restraint, control, containment, classicism, "and yet always there seems to be an effort to escape" (Vastokas, 1975, p. 16).

Through its intensity of form, Haida art " [speaks] of an ordered universe, and yet continually [probes] the boundaries of the unknown" (Pringle, 1969, p. 48). It creates a balance "between the courage to go beyond logic and, at the same time, to hang in there with tradition" (Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 37). The Haida "perception of reality differs in its refusal to separate rigidly the visible and the known from its opposites" (Hume, 1979, p. 27). A drama is created between the intellectual and the intuitive, the logical and the illogical, between beauty and function, and between tribal mythology and personal symbolism. It serves to balance the magical and the scientific:

art lies half-way between scientific knowledge and mythical or magical thought. It is common knowledge that the artist is both something of a scientist and of a 'bricoleur'. By his craftsmanship he constructs a material object which is also an object of knowledge. (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1962,

p. 22)

Haida art, as does all art, synthesizes extremes in a unique way.

It is a transformation of surfaces "into images conceived in the mind's eye of a Haida artist" (Sheehan, 1981, p. 65). In the magic of the creative act, the spirit world and the human world are brought into interaction. Art preserves myths and thus preserves a common perception of reality. It causes the sacred to endure and gives meaning to life. The preservation of myths, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss, allows for the maintaining of a coherent understanding of the universe and events:

Myths and rites are far from being, as has often been held, the product of man's 'myth-making faculty,' turning its back on reality. Their principal value is indeed to preserve until the present time the remains of methods of observation and reflection which were (and no doubt still are) precisely adapted to discoveries of a certain type: those which nature authorised from the starting point of a speculative organization and exploitation of the sensible world in sensible terms. (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1962, p. 16)

Haida art is an expression of freedom as it transcends restrictions through symbolism. It moves beyond temporal reality to encounter a spiritual, supernatural realm--the foreign territory of sym-

bolism.

In this foreign territory of symbolism--not fully understood even by such scholars as Holm and Reid--rests most of the frequently claimed, but ill-defined "mystique" or "mystical quality" of the work. One can certainly see the appeal of such an interpretation, for it readily explains away the decided "strangeness" or "foreignness" of this art. Too often, the tendency to invoke the mystical overwhelms any aesthetic or intellectual considerations and merely serves to emphasize the "differentness" of the work and the people who created it.

Lévi-Strauss speaks of a club used by the Haida to kill fish as a masterwork of artistic symbolism. He differentiates the work of art from a myth, by noting its emphasis on structure, rather than on event (see reference note¹):

Everything about this implement--which is also a superb work of art--seems to be a matter of structure: its mythical symbolism as well as its practical function. More accurately, the object, its function and its symbolism seem to be inextricably bound up with each other and to form a closed system in which there is no place for events.
(Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1962, p. 26)
(see Figure 7)

Paradoxically, the world of symbolism is also a world of certain restrictions. But, nonetheless, it provides inroads into a world beyond material form and the five senses.

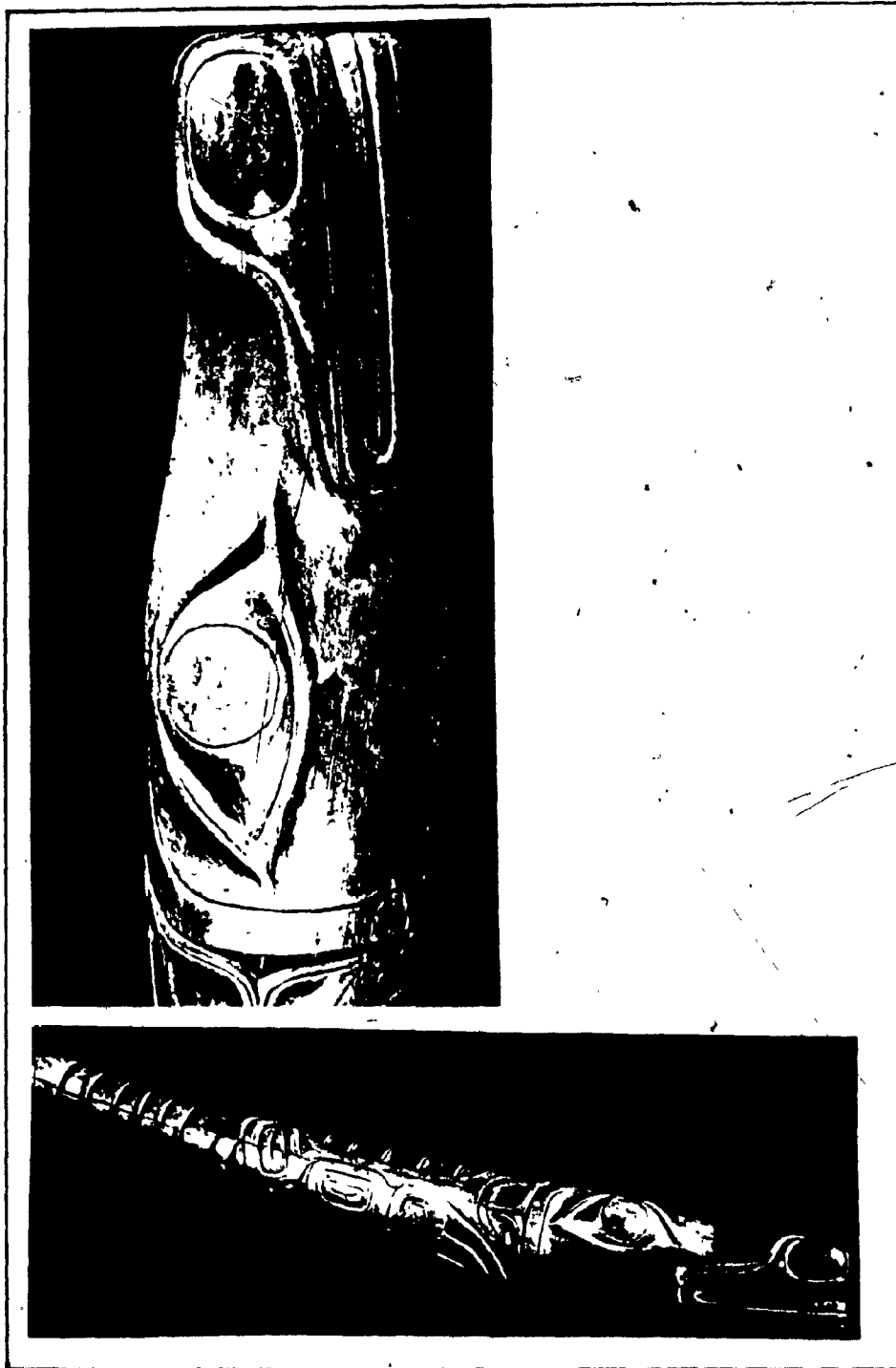


Figure 7. Haida club used for killing fish. (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1962, Plate 2)

In spite of the fact that art has continued to exist--and many of its characteristics have remained unchanged over the years, another fact still looms--that drastic change has taken place from the period before contact with white man up to the present day. Art's culturally integrated role has been transplanted by an aesthetic and commercial one. Although traditional symbols often remain, they have lost their former meanings. They have assumed new ones. Content, meaning and function have been through a transformation process. This needs to be acknowledged, defined and explained (see chapters 6 and 7).

Specific manifestations of change have occurred in the tools, subject matter and media of art making. With new tools (egs. metal knives and adzes), come new techniques. With changing subject matter comes the search for new and appropriate mediums of expression. When old functions are gone, old media are brought under question. With new functions, new media are adopted:

Though painting had been used on objects for thousands of years, it was with the use of paper and canvas that Indian painting as distinct from Indian crafts came into existence and was brought into the twentieth century. (Highwater, 1978, p. 58)

The reasons for these changes are many and varied. Receptivity to change among the Haida and their tendency to comply with commercial demand have already been discussed. To a minor degree, even by merit of the materials it used, traditional Haida art was destined to disappear. The natural and chosen artistic medium of the coast was, of course, wood (primarily yellow cedar). Its nature as a decayable material allowed it to vanish quickly from under the art-maker's grasp. Historians believe that because even repairs had to be done by skilled artists and another potlatch had to be given to rededicate renovated poles, that poles were left to rot and not replaced. "A rededicated pole added nothing to social status so it was more likely that a new pole would be commissioned, while the old pole was left standing until it fell over-- in 75 to 80 years at most" (Vanderwall, 1972, p. 56).

The nature of culture itself is also explanation for changes. Although cultures can be defined as enduring bedrock realities in belief, thinking and activity, they are also living, growing, transforming entities. Terms such as "traditional" and "contemporary" can be convenient labels, but as are all labels, they are artificial impositions.

Cultures, whose outward forms, materials, customs and activities are naturally in a constant state of flux, cannot be defined in distinct and mutually exclusive stages. If challenged long and hard enough by external pressures, however, a culture's natural process of change, within the stability of its identity, can be interrupted and forced to manifest unnatural transformations.

"Cultures" are integrated systems of belief and behavior, which tend to resist change. However, some aspects of culture are less resistant to change than others. In general it is easier to change items of material culture and technology than it is to change non-material aspects such as attitudes and beliefs; the test of a new tool is its obvious utility, but there is no such easy test for a new belief. Habitual patterns of economic activity tend to resist change because they are usually linked with social customs and established rhythms of life. Social and religious beliefs and observances are most resistant of all, for they are set in deeply engrained convictions about how the universe operates, and what is right and wrong. But since a culture is an integrated whole, a change in one aspect produces indirect changes in others. And resistance can be overcome by strong enough pressures. In the situation which followed the onrush of white settlement, drastic cultural change was inevitable. The Indians, by choice, adapted many new forms, starting chain reactions of change within their own cultures. Added to that, forces in the domin-

ant culture were applying strong pressures to destroy the old patterns and impose new ones. The question was not whether the Indians would change, it was whether in the end they would disappear as a distinct group in the population ("assimilation"), or would retain or create a sub-culture which could endure in some harmonious relationship with the larger culture ("integration").
(Duff, 1965, p. 75)

White man's oppression--an issue which has been thus far avoided. It, too, has played a role in the changes that have occurred within Haida ranks. By attitude (eg. 'these savages need to be educated in civilized ways') and by law (eg. the banning of the potlatch) the white man caused the at least partial obliteration of a people. Except by a few clear-sighted historians, artists were not respected by the white. The Haidas followed suit. Art-makers "were [not] valued as artists functioning within their own culture the way the generation of artists before them had served traditional Haida society" (Sheehan, 1981, p. 116). Art declined through lack of support.

The theory of continuity is again defied, in spite of hints that art and culture may be constants through historical time. The questions again arise: Is there any on-going thread in Haida culture

or in the role of art within it? Or are we dealing with two distinct phenomena--one past and one present?

A short diversion into the history of argillite carving will perhaps be helpful in coming to grips with the preceding questions. Until May, 1982, Carol Sheehan is devoting an entire exhibit at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary to Haida argillite carvings. Her book/catalog called Pipes That Won't Smoke; Coal That Won't Burn (1981) elaborates on the art forms and on the artistic phenomena that surrounded them.

Argillite carving did survive as an art expression through the transition years in Haida culture. The processes and products of the art form have meaning. They tell an artistic history and are visual metaphors for the reality of cultural conflicts within Haida society.

For instance, when the Haida spirit was dangerously threatened and brought nearly to the point of irreparable brokenness:

Haida artists, secure in their own culture and their confident belief that they were equal or superior to the Euro-Americans, poked fun at the 'strangers' culture through non-sense images in argillite; the ultimate punch line was, of course, that the

carvers sold these images to the people who provided the subjects for their art. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 94)

If the art was not deliberately playful, it was deliberately confusing in order to preserve the sacred from contamination. Traditional crest images and iconography were scrambled, or related forms invented that had no meaning for Haida sensibilities (see Figure 8).

The example of the pipe form further illustrates how the Haida dealt with a potentially dissonant situation. Lack of clarity of meaning and/or intentional irony characterized these carvings. Haida artists created pipes that would not smoke, with the intention of portraying what they found paradoxical in white society (see Figures 9 and 10).

Sheehan suggests that in the artistic periods which followed the "Non-sense" stages, artists took up renewed interest in preserving the last vestiges of their culture through their artistic expressions. Argillite carving was as it were a last testimony of the Haida. The "subject matter of the carvings shifted dramatically at this time from poking fun at a foreign culture to recording aspects of their own vanishing traditions" (Sheehan, 1981, p. 96) (see Figures 11, 12 and 13).

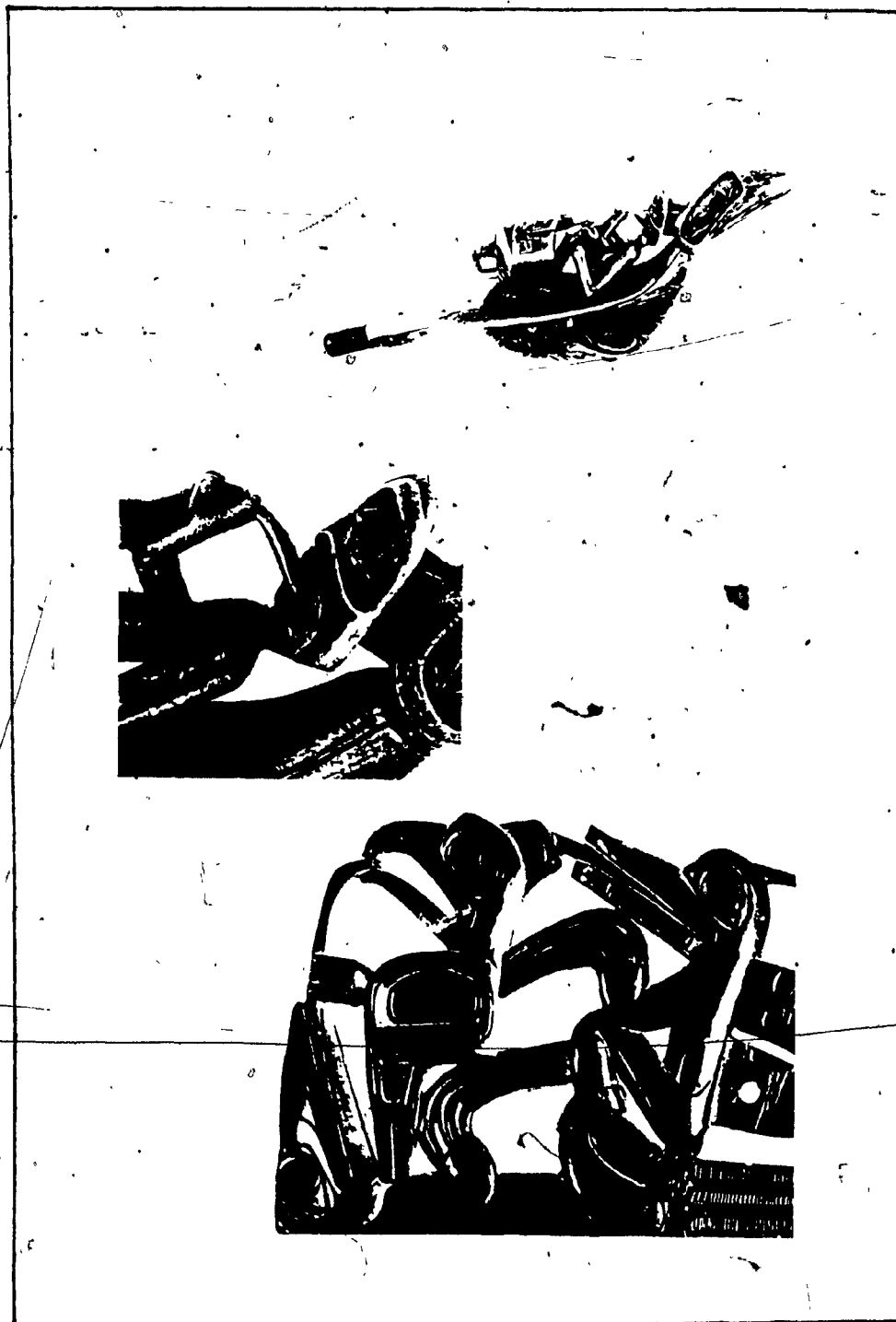


Figure 8. -Period One. Raven rattle - argillite.
 The exchange of tongues motif without
 conventional meanings attached.
 -Period One. Raven rattle - detail.
 -Period One. Panel pipe - detail - argil-
 lite. The exchange of tongues motif.
 (Sheehan, 1981, p. 72)

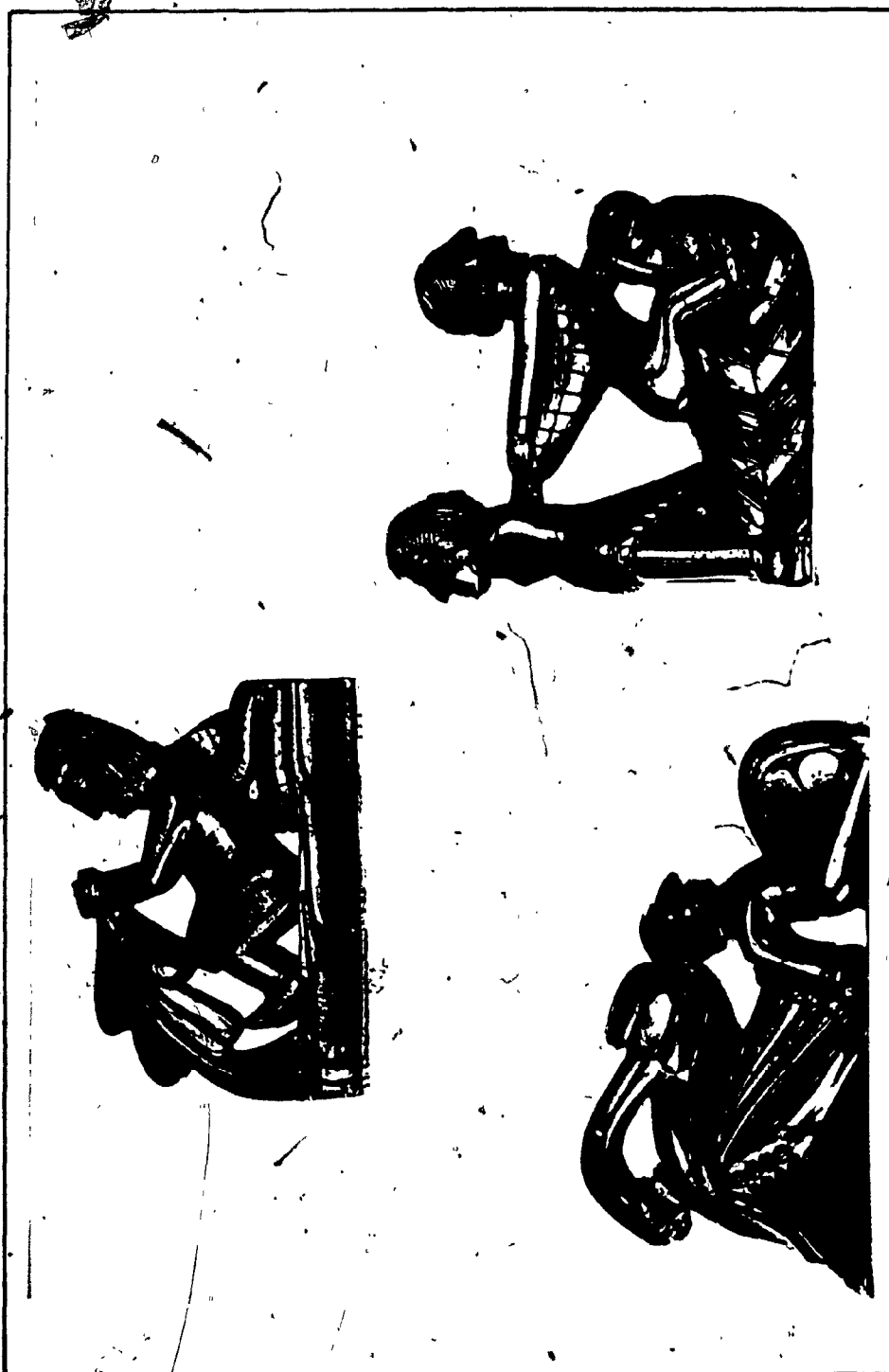


Figure 9. Period Two. Fragments of argillite panel pipes. Human figures in western dress, engrossed in non-sensical activities. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 81)



Figure 10. Period Two. Trade-type pipe. Figures involved in complex but meaningless activity. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 88)



Figure 11. Period Three. Plate with dragonfly image. Conventional Haida crests and myths. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 101)

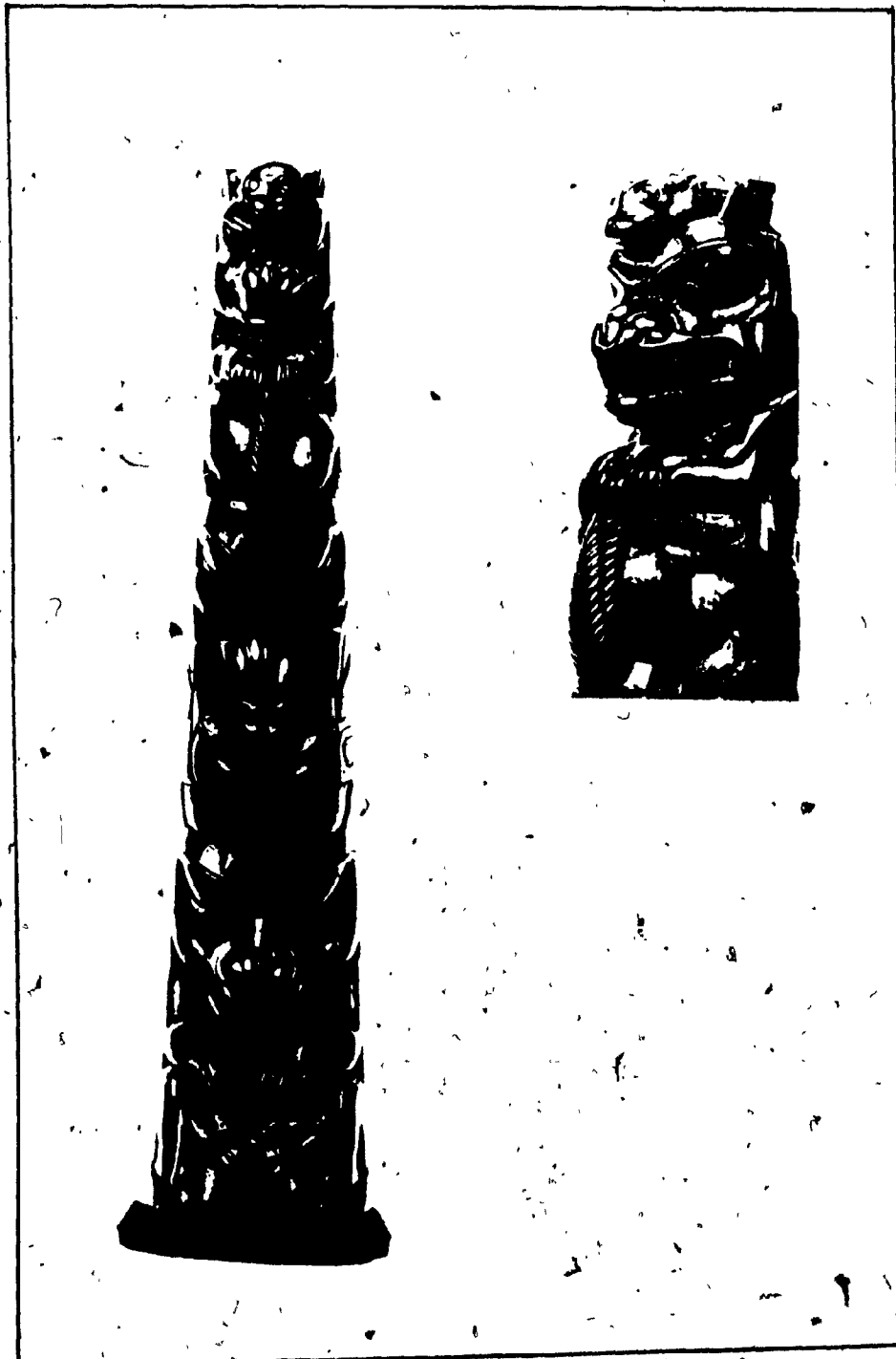


Figure 12. Period Three. Argillite pole with raven and eagle crests. Top figure on this crest pole is an image of Wa'ago, the part-wolf, part-killer-whale creature of Haida myth. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 112)

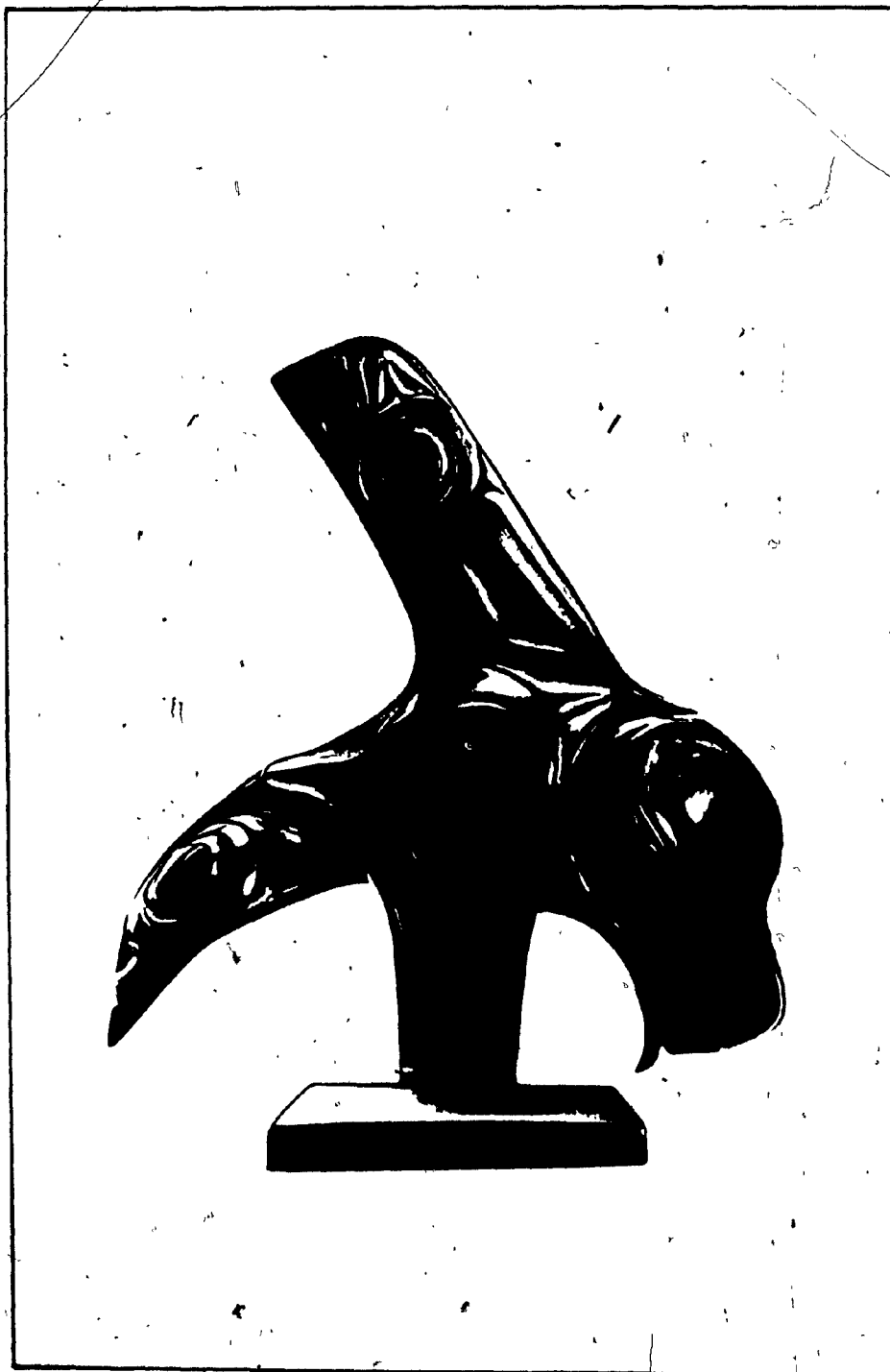


Figure 13. Period Three. Argillite sculpture of killer-whale. Illustrates renewed sense of innovation and experimentation with traditional crest figures. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 121)

Throughout the History of argillite carving there are strong references to an on-going artistic phenomenon. The history seems to illustrate, in microcosmic form, the story of Haida art's changing roles--then and now. A reply is begun to the question of continuity.

Chapter 6

Art: Examining Roles in the Past

... Placing this over his head, he swam up the inlet to the mouth of a small stream. The water here was shallow and as wide as a lake. Floating at the mouth of this stream, he traced a channel in it with his hand.

He stayed in the water this way for some time, when something came toward him suddenly, making a loud booming sound. He looked up, and someone was standing there on the shore in front of him. In his right hand he held a knotted rope and the branch of a wild apple tree. In his left hand was a piece of seaweed and the leaves of a certain bush...

Function and beauty were united in the traditional art of the Haida. As Bill Reid (Haida artist) points out while examining a wooden ladle: "One characteristic of Northwest Coast art [was] paradoxical: things were very functional, yet function was never permitted to interfere with aesthetics" (Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 76) (see Figures 14 and 15). There was no difference, to use anachronistic terms, between the applied and the fine arts. In fact, there was no word for "art" in the Haida language (Hume, 1979, p. 28). All that was, was decorated. The roles and meanings attached to totem poles and other erect structures, longhouses, ceremonial costume and paraphernalia and everyday objects such as clothing, utensils and containers varied, but always, the utilitarian was one and the same with the beautiful.

In a conversation between Bill Reid and Bill Holm about the above-mentioned wooden ladle, the relationship between beauty and function is understood to be so intimate as to be a matter of one deriving from the other:

Holm: Perhaps my narrow use of the word functional is the problem. I see the aesthetic aspect of this ladle as functional.

Reid: The sea produced the aesthetic because the canoe not only



Figure 14. Northwest Coast wooden ladle. (Holm
& Reid, 1975, pp. 74, 75)



Figure 15. Detail of wooden ladle - handle. (Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 76)

had to be functional, it had to be beautiful to be.

Holm: Its beauty derives from its function.
(Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 76)

There was aesthetic value in Haida works, apart from their utilitarian or communicative purposes. They could engage man's perceptual capacity simply for the sake of delighting the eye with pleasing ornament, balance and/or composition. As Bill Holm comments, there was a certain appreciation of art objects--the idea of the object as beautiful, beyond its function (Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 97).

The look of Haida art was distinctive. It was bold in design, vivid in colors of black, red and blue-green, stylized in form and varied in expression from pure abstraction to figuration (see Figures 16, 17 and 18). "The artist's first concern was his field of design, and the figure would accomodate itself to this field" (Crawford, 1978, p. 301). Forms were adapted to the shape of the object decorated--whether it be a canoe, a ladle, an oil dish or a crest mortuary pole. (Masks seemed to be an exception to this rule. If realism was called for, design necessities influenced the form.) Spaces were never left unadorned.

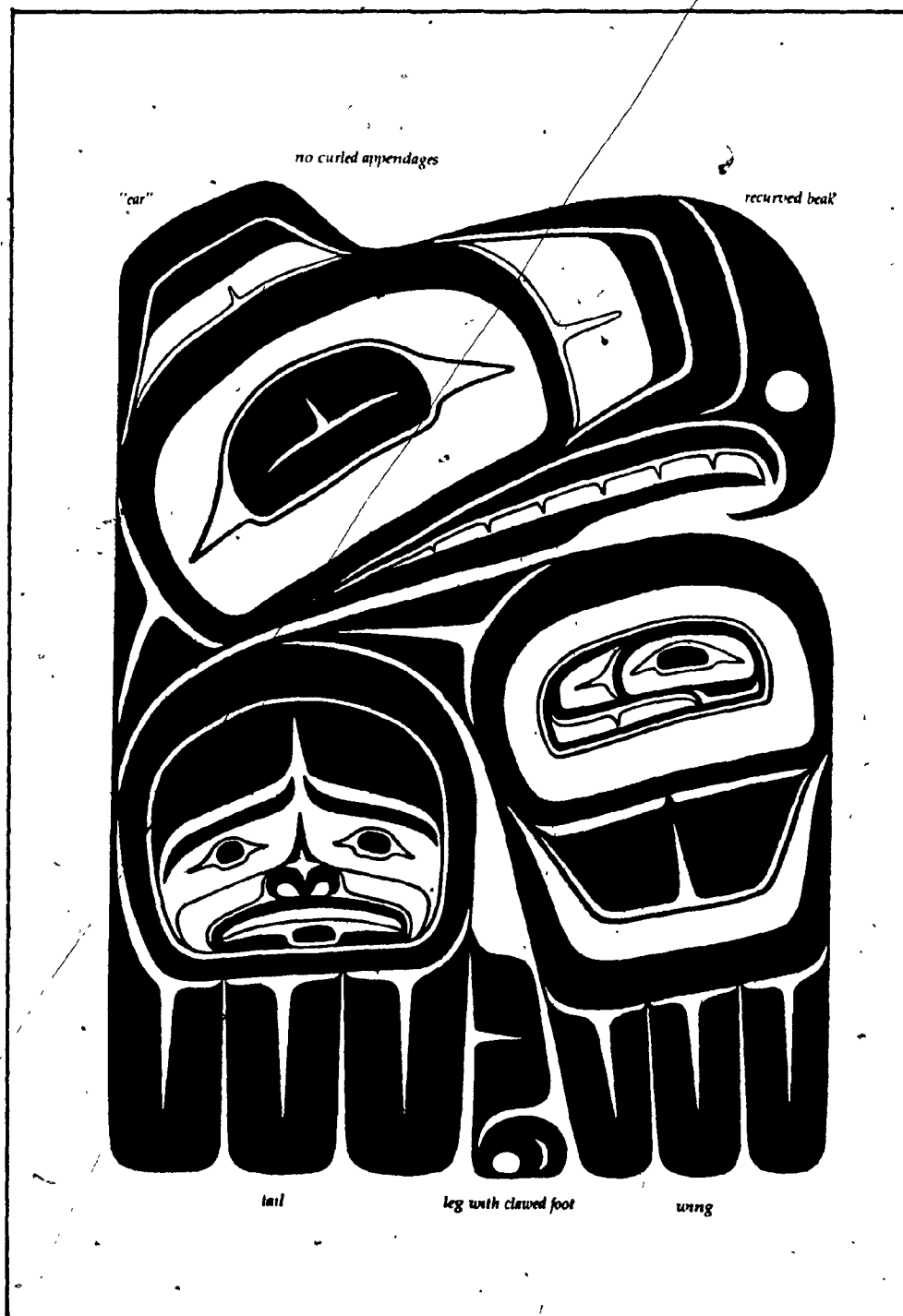


Figure 16. "Haida Hawk" by Freda Diesing. Recurved beak distinguishes this bird from the eagle. (Stewart, 1979, p. 61)

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24.

Elements of northern Northwest Coast design were first given formal definition by Bill Holm. The most basic of these elements is the *formline* (a) a sweeping line-like figure that begins from a point, characteristically sweeps with one pulse and then diminishes when it touches another design element. Other design elements are (b) ovoids and (c) T-shaped ovoids. (d) simple eye, (e) beak, (f) U-forms, (g) split U-forms, (h) split T-forms, and (i) double eye forms. These design elements can be combined by the artist to produce designs of great variety. (Illustration by Daqum based on Holm's work.)

Figure 17. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 69)



Figure 18. "Haida Raven" by Bill Reid. Form lines flow freely, and although asymmetrical, the design is balanced. (Stewart, 1979, p. 105)

Symmetry and rhythmic repetition were accentuated in the well-integrated designs. Interlocking of figures was common.

Conventional techniques and symbols included the form line, the ovoid, and U-shape, the S-shape and the animal and human standard icons. At first glance, design elements seem complex, but one discovers that "the individual design elements separate out from the whole, and then the relationships of these units to each other and the overall design becomes clear" (Crawford, 1978, p. 301). The form line created a sense of movement and unity, as did interlocking series of figures and large and small forms alternated in rhythmic sequence (Drucker). As illustrated in the design of the storage box in the Cleveland Museum, "the avoidance of exact repetition [was] characteristic ... which constantly [varied] the basic design units to create new patterns" (Crawford, 1978, pp. 302 - 303).

The primary source of uniqueness in Haida art was found, not in minor deviations from the uniformity of expression, but rather in the variety of relationships which were found between the parts, and the creative compositions which formed the whole. There was an "imaginative translation of organic forms into powerful abstract and expressive

shapes" (Bloore, 1969, p. 37).

Nature was the source of much thematic content in Haida art. The surroundings--botanical, animal and physical--provided the foundation for the iconography of the art. It also provided the media of the art (eg. wood for carving). Objects were created, partially, in response to the physical environment.

Although "plants and flowers were rarely used as totemic emblems and only a few poles with botanical association are to be found" (Gunn, 1967, p. 17), most design, no matter how abstract, can be traced back to an animal or human form. A more recently carved totem pole called "The Flower of Yan," at the Museum of Northern B.C., exhibits the rare leaf and floral motif (see Figure 19). A 64½-foot Haida war canoe, on display in the Museum of Natural History, New York City, exhibits a combination of natural references. There is a quasi-figurative animal sculpture on the bow and bird-like designs at the stern. Floral patterns run along the gunwales.

THE FLOWER OF YAN

Yan was a northern Haida village across the inlet from Masset. Once boasting some of the finest totem poles, it is now completely deserted but for the ghostly remains of the famous Eagle, too long exposed to the elements to be preserved.

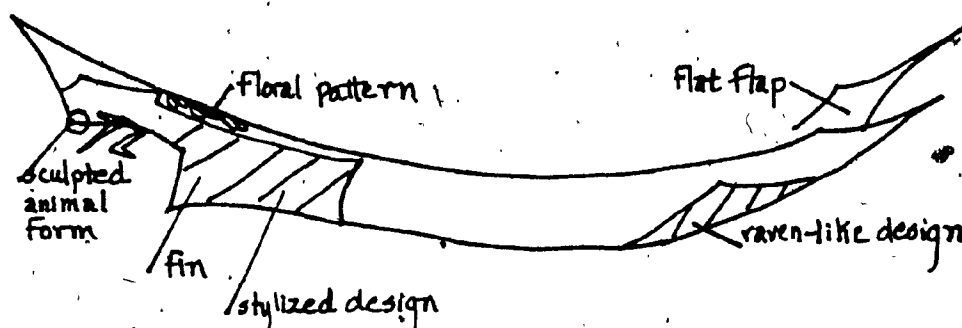
The Flower Totem of Yan is most atypical, included here as an example of unusual carving. Plants and flowers were rarely used as totemic emblems and only a few poles with botanical association are to be found.

This pole, at the entrance of the Museum of Northern B.C., belonged to Chief Gayaw of the Ravens. In the mid-nineteenth century, prospering from the sea-otter trade, the Chief made several trips to far-away Victoria in his dugout canoe. Admiring the white man's garden flowers, he made the unusual choice of adopting them as a family emblem and represented them on his totem pole.

The crests are: Eagle, two floral stems, Grizzly Bear and Grizzly Bear.



Figure 19. (Gunn, 1967, p. 17)



Rough observation sketch.
 Body of the canoe made from the trunk of
 a cedar tree.
 Length: $64\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Width: 8 feet.
 Carried war parties or ceremonial groups
 (as opposed to canoes for fishing,
 which carried only 2 or 3 people).

The human face and/or assorted and associated stylized features can be observed in all forms of art. Rarely was the human figure depicted alone, and representations were often fragmentary, showing simply the face or the hand. There were always at least some animal features as well. Usually the animal figure was the dominant image, with the human features incorporated within the design in a minimal way--in a joint, on a wing, in the exposed inner anatomy of the creature or as part of the ear.

The house frontal pole in the foyer of the McCord Museum, Montreal, depicts this process of transformation. At the base is a long-beaked raven. A human form emerged above it, from between its wings. Spirit and form experience change. The

"mask-within-a-mask" was a familiar object used in ceremonial dance. It was carved in such a way that a human face was hidden within that of an animal. When the mask was opened, it revealed the human face or spirit within the animal. The interchangeability between animal and human images was dramatized.

This phenomenon, rather than being incidental, is significant in revealing the basic beliefs and ideologies of the Haida. All Haida works were useful and were beautiful; and they also all had meanings and played specific roles.

Animal and human were conceived of as manifestations of one spirit. In the beginning, according to Indian legend, all fauna had the appearance of human beings. All earth's creatures--man, animal, bird, fish, reptile--were one. The spirit of the animal resided in the man; and the man's spirit in the animal. Even though the Transformer came and changed the form of some of these beings, it was believed that metamorphosis of an animal into a human or a human into an animal could still take place at any time. Thus, the combination of icons in artistic imagery. Stewart (1979) notes:

This act of transformation
was often played out in dances
and theatrical presentations,

usually with the help of a mask especially designed to create the illusion. In two-dimensional design, transformation is portrayed by showing a creature as part human; just an arm and hand may be sufficient for the purpose. A human head incorporated into a faunal design (other than the ovoid joint) may simply be a reminder that the creature has transformed from human to its present form, or that it is able to do so. (p. 34)
(see Figure 20)

Many Haida legends tell of humans living with animals, extracting power from them and returning to human society with these powers. The human gained significant identity only as he had an encounter with a bear, raven, wolf, whale or other creature common to the northwest coast. As a result of these encounters, families and clans often created historic lineages which could be traced back to a particular animal (Crawford, 1978, p. 299). Animal crests, which specified status within the Indian community, were developed and manifest in a wide variety of art forms.

Crests had definite social and cultural functions. They made the social and supernatural worlds visible. Present on a variety of art forms, they communicated the family myth of the owner. They depicted the identity of an ancestor, and his "special supernatural visitations or relations with



Figure 20. "Serpent Dancer" by Joe David. Portrays the transformation of a dancer, in serpent headdress, into a mythical being. Head, arm and hand are still in human form. (Stewart, 1979, p. 35)

the myth people, in their forms as birds, animals and other beings" (Hawthorn, 1976, p. 21). These lineages made visible in art, were valued property to be handed down to succeeding generations. Symbolized were family connections, priveleges, wealth and honor. All crests, masks and rights to symbols, dances, songs and rituals were hereditary property. "Thus the art style itself, through the objects made according to its dictates, was intimately linked with the social organization, rank and status, as well as the ceremonial patterns" (Drucker, 1955, p. 181). Art was never created for art's sake alone.

Names, as well as the crests, indicated heritage (egs. Little Bear, Big Wolf, Black Raven). Whether it be a kerf box or a tiny spoon, the Haida object was impregnated with meaning. Designs were woven into hats and depicted elements of the wearer's crest. The handles of ladles on display in New York's Museum of Natural History "were beautifully carved to represent various supernatural beings, often enacting an episode from some myth."

Sometimes the carvings portrayed the owner's 'crests,' representations of animals or supernatural beings associated with its legendary ancestors" (American Museum of Natural History).

The iconography used by the Haida Indian, and the relationships between the human and animal icons in particular, serve to communicate the Indian's understanding of the universe, the natural world and himself. The premise that there is a relationship between content and larger meanings is based on Feldman's conclusion that all true art serves a function, and that symbols and their relationship to each other have meaning (Feldman, 1967).

The Haida chose to communicate visually and orally. They had no written tradition to record their legends, religion, medicine or history. Such facts were woven into the fabric of their art, conversation, song, myth and storytelling, and passed down from generation to generation by ear, by tongue and by visual memory. The Haida developed a sophisticated visual language through their art. Art images were displayed on every surface imaginable--on horn spoons, canoes, crest and mortuary poles, house screens, boxes and bowls, painted and woven garments--and were even painted or tattooed on human bodies. Art symbols were metaphorically words, and the art piece, a sentence or story.

Art's specific functions as a visual language

were social, personal and physical (Feldman, 1967, chapter 1 and 3).

The physical function of any object was, of course, the purpose for which it was used in the community. The art also met social needs for display, celebration and communication. It expressed collective aspects of existence. It communicated the core beliefs of the Haida about his universe, his immediate surroundings and all living creatures, including himself.

At one level, personal and cultural values were one and the same. Personal expression of individual feelings was subordinated to communication of common values through standard icons. The art was as nonemotional and as unsentimentalized as it was nonverbal. It did not raise questions, as does so much avant garde art today, but rather it stated traditional dogmas and philosophies. The clarity and consistency with which form line and icon were reproduced were reflective of this fact. Stability existed in both form and meaning.

Haida people, themselves, although acknowledging this standardization in their artistic expression, would suggest that there was opportunity for individual creativity, however. Again, the dialectic

tribal mythology, but also personal symbolism; the collective, but also the unique; social cohesion, but also individual freedom. Haida art seems an example of the "mutual adjustment between shared cultural myth and idiosyncratic personal myth" (Adams, 1981, p. 378). To those who would restrict Haida art to the category "primitive" and attribute to it only tribal characteristics and artistic anonymity, Bill Reid and Bill Holm would provide a rebuttal. They see personal expression speaking through collective style in a curve-sided food bowl they are examining:

Holm: A formalized body of analytical, intellectual rules combines with great individual expression. (Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 109)

Reid: An artist, in a rigidly structured society, must express his individuality to the utmost, but within that structure. Men utilize what they have at hand to express their personalities. Northwest Coast artists used the structure of art itself. So you get both very open and very concentrated form lines. (Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 110) (see Figures 21, 22 and 23)

And to change the perspective again--though innovation and creativity is to be allowed for, it is inaccurate to read into Haida art "the dissociated consciousness and 'free' imagination of the contemporary artist. This [was] conservative art,

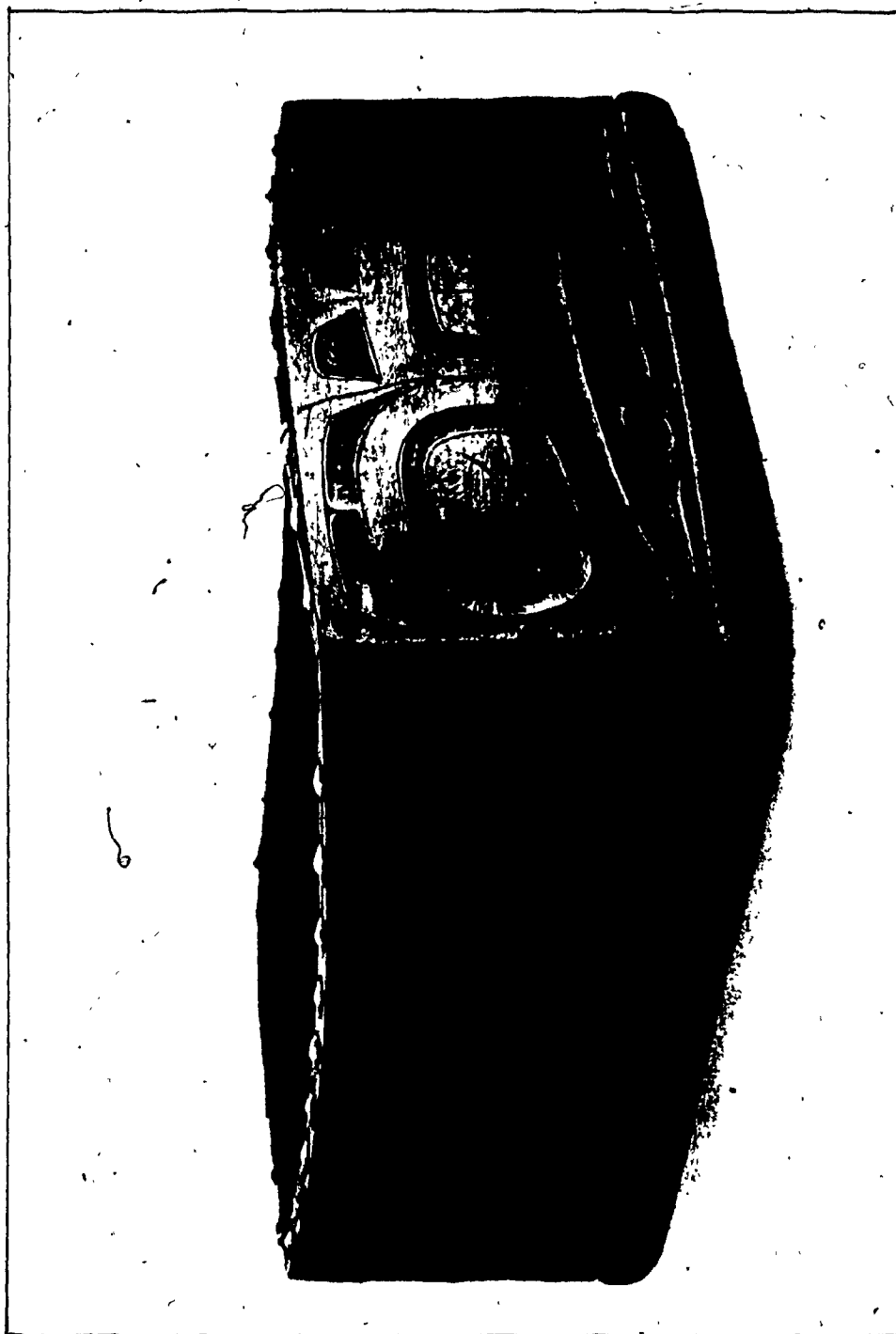


Figure 21. Curve-sided food bowl - Haida. (Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 108)

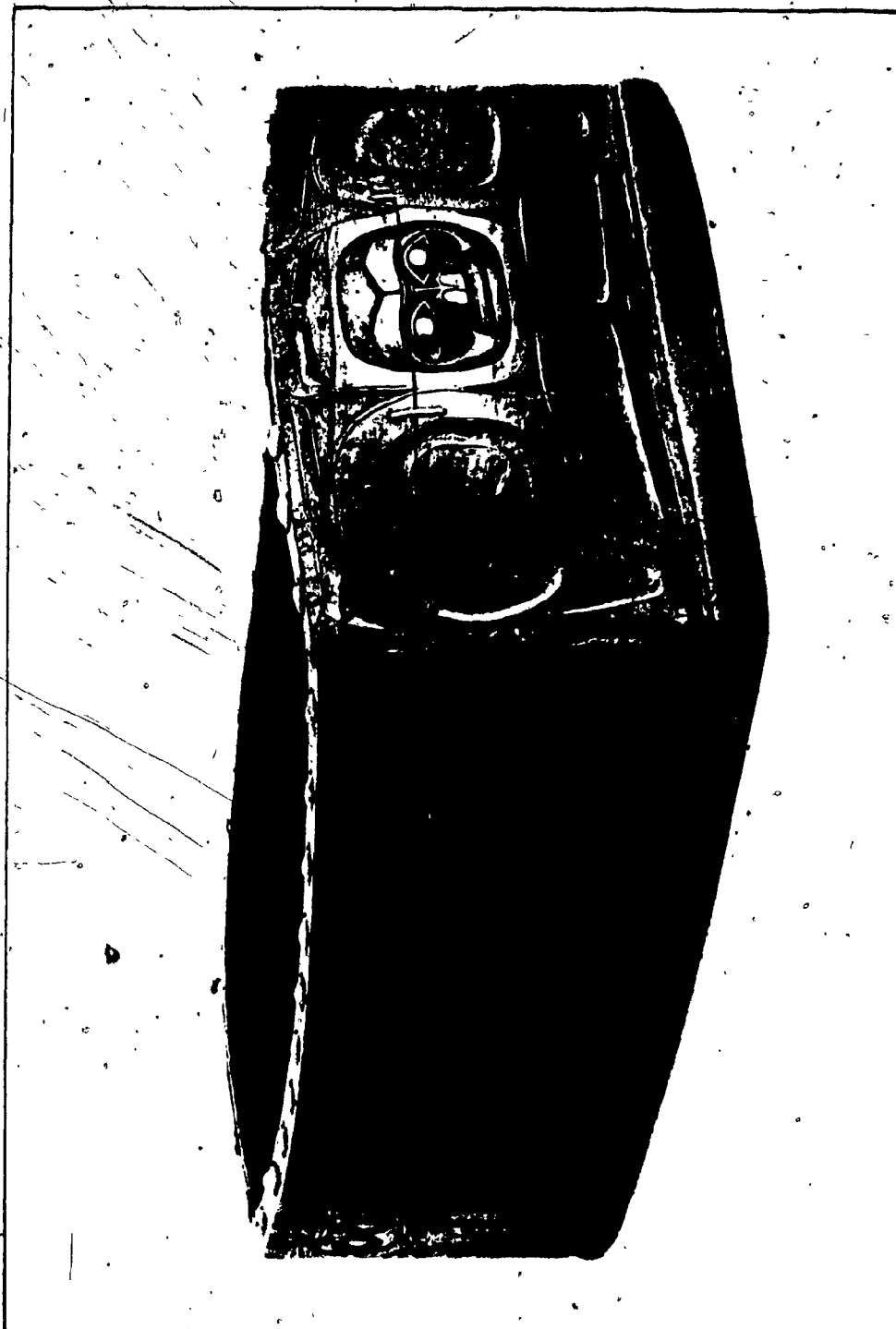


Figure 22. Curve-sided food bowl - Haida. (Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 109)

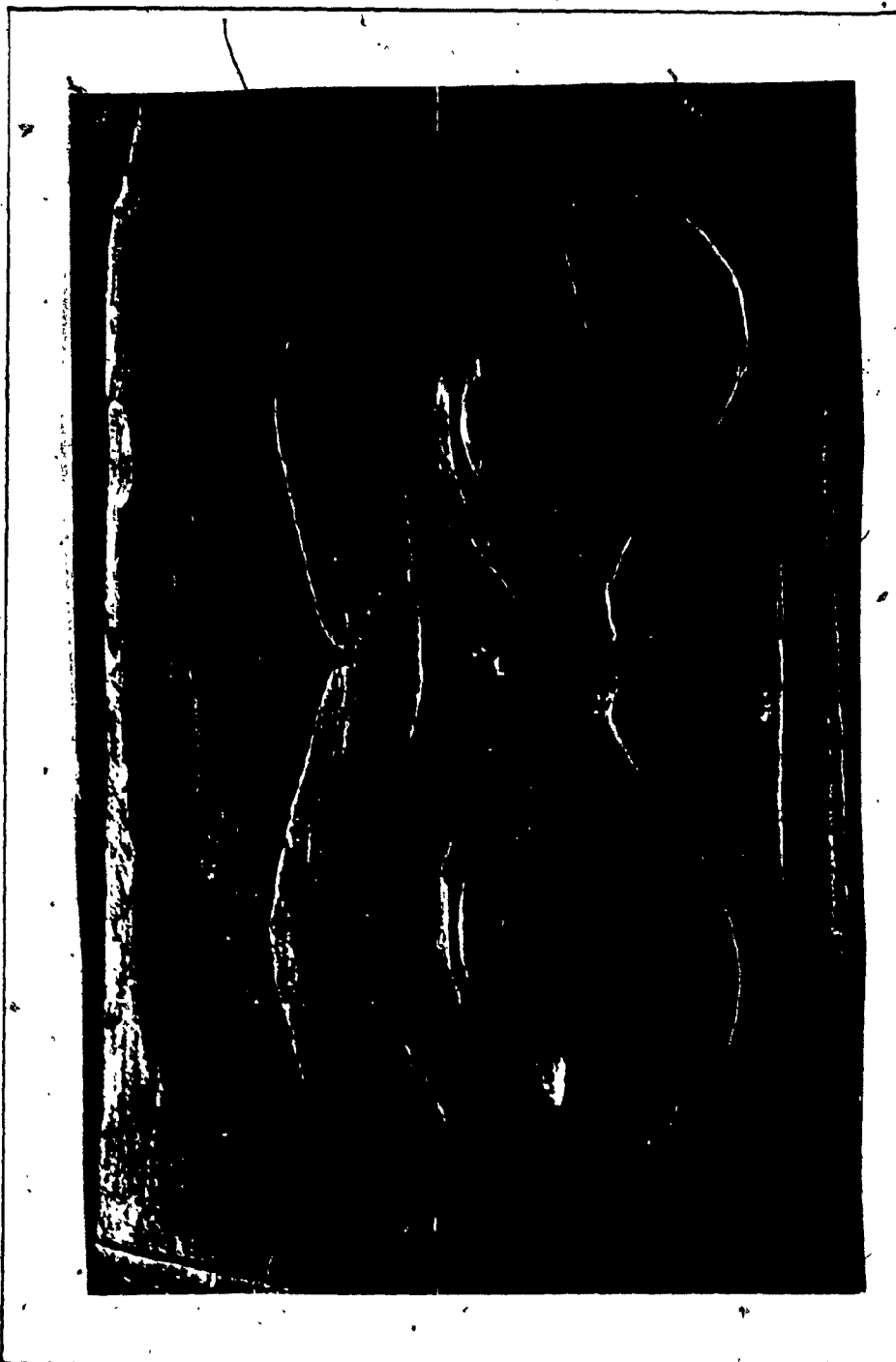


Figure 23. Curve-sided food bowl - detail. (Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 111)

which [worked] to bring the unseen forces in the world into perceptible forms" (Pringle, 1969, p. 48),

Art was a part of everyone's life in the traditional Haida community. Most sources indicate that "the artist" role was not filled by an elite few, but by the majority. Being a good artist was as necessary a part of life as being a good speech-maker, fisherman, canoe builder, basket weaver or ceremonial dancer. Handicrafts, weaving and basket-making were the work of women. Designing, carving and painting were the tasks for men. All, however, were art-makers and, as Bill Reid points out connoisseurs, as well.

These objects weren't merely used at ceremonial affairs. They were treated as art objects, passed from hand to hand, admired, fondled, examined closely. Everyone was a critic and connoisseur. Everyone probably felt some direct relationship with the objects in his immediate family, and maybe even with those in the whole community. These were communities of connoisseurs.

(Holm & Reid, 1975, p. 97)

The most distinctive art form of the Haida, in comparison to those of other cultures, was the totem pole. Like all other artistic expressions they exhibited a stylized realism, pure lines, boldness and balance. They were massive, but carved with meticulous attention given to basic design

and symbolic convention. Emblematic representations of animals, birds, fish and mythological beings filled and indented the surfaces. Surface variations responded to changes in light conditions (see Figure 24).

The poles were not true three-dimensional sculptures, however, for they were not usually carved in full round. An efficient system was devised for erecting the poles. A six-foot hole was dug and then packed with the pole and boulders. The remaining spaces were well tamped down with earth and smaller boulders. Packing was effective in weighting the lower end of the pole against wind stress and also provided good drainage. Poles rarely uprooted. They more usually would rot off at ground level and fall, or even rot entirely, leaving the interred stumps as lone remembrances.

Totem poles fell into three main categories in traditional Haida life: the mortuary pole, the commemorative pole and the house frontal pole.

The mortuary pole stood either alongside the grave of a deceased person, usually someone of high rank such as a chief, or served not only as a commemoration but also as a grave. The body was either stored in a niche at the back of the pole, or in a box resting atop it. The box was a horizontal

Figure 24. Totem pole from Queen Charlotte Islands -
Tanu. (Gunn, 1967, p. 2)

memorial and the pole, a grave-box support. There were single and double mortuary posts.

Commemorative poles celebrated great events-- marriage or war, perhaps--or great leaders, perhaps an hereditary chief or a war hero. If it were a family pole, heirs, who would assume the predecessor's title and prerogatives, were symbolically depicted. These poles were erected along the beach in front of the village.

Each longhouse sported its own frontal pole which not only identified, through crests and visual narratives, the lineage and privileges of its inhabitants, male and female, eagle and raven, but also served as the main buttress for the roof beam. At the base of the pole a hole was carved as an entrance into the longhouse. "Tribal heraldry and mythology [were] artistically woven into [the] impressive columnar sculpture" (Gunn, 1967, p. 5). "In its purest form, the totem pole [was] essentially a legal document, recording by allusion of the figures carved on it, the claim of its owner to certain rights, titles or prerogatives" (Smyly & Smyly, 1976, p. 24). The top of the pole, which rose high above the roof, identified and paid tribute to the guardian spirit of the home (Wells, 1975, p. 33).

The various poles all possessed definite meanings; but did not have particular religious significance. They were respected, but never worshipped. The Haida were not practisers of totemism, as could be assumed by the presence of totem poles in their culture.

The sacredness of the totem pole itself has been assumed by some writers. Virginia Crawford, in discussing Northwest Coast art, understands that objects were imbued with the spirits of the animals or mythical figures they represented:

Every aspect of their daily lives revolved around ritual. The spirit world played an important role in the way they carried out their everyday activities as well as their special ceremonies. They developed animistic beliefs that pervaded every aspect of their life and are especially evident in their art. The artifacts created by the Indians had a twofold purpose: first there was the desire to decorate and second there was the intent to imbue the object with the spirit of the animal or mythological figure represented on it. The Indians believed that at one time animals and men were one, that the spirit of the animal resided in the man, and the man in the animal. Indeed, to them the metamorphosis of an animal into a human could still take place. Hence a basic theme of their myths is the confrontation of a man and an animal, often with the animal in human form. (Crawford, 1978, p. 299)

In response to Crawford's statement, it must be noted that Haida totem poles were communicators and story-tellers only. They were not sacred in, and of, themselves. Spiritual power transference and transformations were described, but did not occur in the substance of the object.

"Strictly speaking, a totem among primitive peoples the world over is a creature or object associated with one's ancestral traditions, toward which one is taught to feel respect and reverence-- true totemism involves a basic attitude of religious awe" (Drucker, 1955, pp. 189 - 190). With the Haida, a person with an eagle, raven, bear, fish or other crest had no particular reverence for creatures of that species. Important in their tradition was not the biologic species, but rather the single specific supernatural being who had used the form of an eagle, raven, bear or fish (Drucker, 1955, pp. 189 - 190).

Keeping the preceding argument in mind, with its premise that totemism is animal/object worship in the form of a spirit cult, one turns to Claude Lévi-Strauss (The Savage Mind - 1962 and Totemism - 1963) in search of further clarification of the issue.

Lévi-Strauss turns the argument upside down

by redefining the nature of totemism. True totemism, he observes, is a communication mode; it is a descriptive language. It is the laying out of the cultural myths, concerning the origins of truth and meaning through the device (in the case of the Haida totem pole, for example) of visual metaphor:

Metaphor, the role of which in totemism we have repeatedly underlined, is not a later embellishment of language but is one of its fundamental modes. Placed by Rousseau on the same plane as opposition, it constitutes, on the same ground, a primary form of discursive thought. (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1963, p. 102)

If this is the truest understanding of totemism, then the Haida should be again cast as a totemic people--as can, by extension of the definition, many other primitive and contemporary cultures. "'Primitive' thought," says Lévi-Strauss, "rests upon a rich and complex conceptual structure" (1962/1963, book jacket) and is in fact engaged in by us all, if we are sorting and communicating our myths in cultural expressions.

Before coming to these conclusions about totemism, Lévi-Strauss discusses the popularly-held beliefs. He indicates that "'totemism' has been applied to a bewildering variety of relationships between human beings and natural species or phenomena" (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1963, p. 9). "The term totem-

ism is used for a form of social organization and magico-religious practise, of which the central feature is the association of certain groups (usually clans or lineages) within a tribe with certain classes of animate or inanimate things, the several groups being associated with distinct classes" (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1963, p. 10). He lists further characteristics of popular totemism:

1. segmentation into groups conscious of their identity;
 2. the bearing by each group of the name of an animal, thing, or natural phenomenon;
 3. the use of this name as term of address in conversation with strangers;
 4. the use of an emblem, drawn on divisional weapons and vehicles, or as personal ornament, with a corresponding [taboo] on the use of the emblem by other groups;
 5. respect for the "patron" and the design representing it;
 6. a vague belief in its protective rôle and in its value as augury.
- (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1963, p. 7)

Totemism is then, a metaphor; it is a symbolic system. And Haida totem poles certainly fit the definition. Crest figures on the poles, on masks or on ceremonial objects were symbolic representations of spiritual powers and man/nature relationships. These products of the Haida art-maker's spirit, mind and body structured Haida myth, Haida culture; in short, Haida reality.

Art works and their roles were many and varied in the Haida culture. Artistic expression was highly valued, seemingly even above a strict adherence to systematized beliefs and ritual. The incentive of dynamic art expression seemed greater than unchanging traditional practises.

Chapter-7 Art: Examining Roles in the Present

... Then he heard a voice saying: "Come here, grandson."

At once the elder brother went to him.

"Now, grandson, turn and face me," the stranger said.

He turned towards him. Then he struck him with the rope, and something opened in him at that place. Then he struck him with the wild apple branch, and the same thing happened.

Then he said: "Grandson, turn your back to me." So he did, and struck him with the leaves of the bush, but he felt nothing. Then he struck him with the seaweed, and it nearly knocked him over. A long way off he recovered his balance ...

The following section reports on a visit made to the Queen Charlotte Islands in December, 1981. The author and her brother flew from Vancouver to Sandspit, and took a ferry across the Inlet to Queen Charlotte City. The purpose of the visit was to re-establish acquaintance with several people in both the white and Haida communities, and to talk informally about the meaning of art in their lives. Rapport had largely been established by previous relationships with family members who had served as a local doctor and nurse team. Individuals conferred with knew of the author's interest in art in general but not of its association with a master's degree. The author's brother was not an art- or education-related person. Informal conversation flowed naturally, and usually the topic of art arose uninitiated. There was no directive interview format. Recording was done by memory, immediately after the contact was made.

It was a grey, misty day as we crossed Skidegate Inlet between Moresby Island and Graham Island--the kind of day that one imagines must always hang over the moist west coast.

Serge, an old-timer on the Queen Charlottes, drove the airport limo on to the twenty-five car ferry. He offered us donuts. We had plenty of time to talk during the crossing, and Serge liked to talk. "Everything's an art. Good bullshitting is an art. It's all art these days." He mused, "Lots of people in to art up here":

Lorne Sharpe. Marsha's boyfriend.
He's an artist, a carver.
There's a French Canadian guy on
a little island south of
Lyell Island.

Benita Saunders.
There's a pottery shop. Museum.
Jungle Beach. Someone cut Ted
Bellis' bear's nose off.
[laughs]

Pat Forest. Marsha's sister.
Quite an artist, in weaving.
Lots of weavings. They're in to
that nowadays.

There was an art exhibit of local art and weavings not long ago. He went to see it but didn't stay long. "If they'd woven some skidders," he said with a wry smile, "it would have been more interesting. I'm a logger."

"Lots of arty types around here."

Along the stretch of road heading towards Queen Charlotte City, Serge commented, always with a quizzical half-grin, "Not very decorated for Christmas around here, eh? I'll bet Vancouver is all prettied up." It was mid-December. We noticed the homes were simple, rather uniform and ramshackle. There was no art. We saw a stained-glass-like Madonna image in one window.

Serge came in with us at our destination to make sure we had rooms. He wouldn't accept a tip.

After putting down our packs and sleeping bags, I went to visit Percy Gladstone. He had a shock of grey-white hair. His wheelchair looked small for him. He was a handsome, big-framed man with long limbs and big hands and feet. In his day he was the only Haida with a university degree. He'd served in the Canadian Air Force and then worked for several years as an advisor to inmates in the B.C. penitentiary system.

He looked up and smiled slowly. He spoke slowly and deliberately, too, with a slight slur. His vocabulary betrayed his education.

He spoke of Robert Davidson's potlatch, held north in Masset, which had taken place a couple of

months previously. Along with Carol Sheehan (had I heard of her?) and many others he'd been invited to the festivities.

It was primarily a commercial thing.

It went on for two days.

There were twenty hand-painted drums, hand-knit sweaters, towels ...

It cost the chap a lot.

I got a bottle of Brut--you know, men's cologne--I wonder what that says about my status?!

[he laughs freely]

During the potlatch they initiated an artist from a village near Tofino. His name was Jo David.

"He and his brothers all came forward. They all looked pretty white to me. Lots of people there."

Robert Davidson's longhouse had been burnt to the ground in Masset. "They had a primary school in there, and classes to teach native languages and dances, and offices." Then a community center; then another building was burnt. Since these burnings spoke of deep-seated rivalries still existent between the Haidas themselves, I knew feelings and reactions would be strong and private. Percy had broached the topic. I let him terminate it: "Oh yeah, there are many undercurrents."

A Haida friend and seaman, Bill Ellis, came in to do some business with Percy. As seemed to happen without exception, and uninitiated by me,

art naturally became the subject of conversation. Bill was reading about Emily Carr. "She was squirrely, you know. She lived here with the Haidas for a while." He had advice for me concerning the least expensive way of getting a boat to Anthony Island to see Ninistints (an abandoned Haida village with many poles still standing and/or intact).

Percy pulled a book out of his hospital side table. It was Carol Sheehan's Pipes That Won't Smoke; Coal That Won't Burn (1981). He'd been reading it, and thought it was good.

I enjoyed the first part, but I didn't really agree with her fourth and last section-- about the contemporary, the "Haida-sense stage."

She pretty well ignores any southern influence.

She emphasizes the Masset art, and only comments on the northern contribution to the argillite.

There wasn't a single word mentioned about Rufus Moody.

[from Skidegate in the south]

You know, an outstanding artist these days is Robert Davidson. [from Masset in the north] I think she's a good friend of Davidson's. She studied under Wilson Duff. Claude and Sarah Davidson. That's Robert's mother and dad. They have a gallery shop.

It's an interesting book to read.

He suggested I look in the museum or the clothing

store if I wanted to buy the book.

Crazy Hibbie, so named by those who knew him, was in the bed "kiddy corner" to Percy. When he overheard us discussing art, he interrupted twice to inform us of his contributions to the field. In Masset were two life-size wooden carvings, one of an old sea captain with a cap and pipe. More recently, Hibbie occupied himself carving avocado pits. "And this is my art, too," he said, showing me his arm tatoos and explaining the symbols and words. His biceps had shrunk so much since his younger, robust days, that this explanation was necessary even for partial recognition.

Percy continued:

There's lots of artists around here.

Gordon Cross. Tell him you're a friend of mine. He hasn't been doing much lately. It depends on the day you see him, whether he'll be friendly or not. Third house in the village. He's got a light truck and a brown station wagon.

Rufus Moody can be terribly unfriendly. Well the worst he could do would be to chase you away. [laughs]

Have you heard of Joe Plaskett? Bill Davis took him down to Anthony. He painted there. His paintings are really selling.

There's this other artist--who just had an exhibit in the

Vancouver Art Gallery.
I don't like the silk-screen
prints.
There are poles in Skidegate and
up in Masset. You should go
and see them.
Totem poles, from what I know,
have always been a commercial
endeavor.

Percy mentioned the word "commercial" several times during our conversation. It seemed to have a pejorative connotation for him.

Mention was made of a Haida war canoe stored in Ottawa, that Vancouver Art Gallery people wanted out west. Fund-raising at \$150.00 per ticket amassed a total of \$350,000.00 for the shipping costs. Queen Charlotte City had made a recent statement in the local paper that the canoe should be on the Islands at the museum site rather than in Vancouver. The controversy was in progress.

There was a quietness and a charm about Percy Gladstone. He spoke directly and unaffectedly. He had the capacity to be critical, but with a hint of playfulness rather than bitterness. Art and Haida were deeply linked.

It was teeming with rain so we decided to hitchhike home from our visit to Skidegate Mission. Ron Wilson picked us up. Our conversation was

immediately art:

Anyone who's the least bit creative is as busy as hell this time of year. Artists are pretty hard to get a hold of. Gordon Cross is pretty hard to get a hold of.

I'm from Skidegate Mission.

I'm a carver myself. It's just a hobby. It's better that way. They want to make you pay sales tax and business tax. To hell with them.

I've got lots of Christmas presents to make. I don't really like working for commissions. I just make 'em, and if they like 'em, they buy 'em. I work in gold and silver now. Everyone uses their own kind of tools. I use machine-made ones. I'm delivering some new drills now.

The art sold in the two general stores was kitsch (sunset scenes in bright oranges and blues, Holly Hobbie plaques, framed pressed flowers and crocheted book marks), and could be found in any small store across the country. There were a few books for sale on the Queen Charlotte Islands and the Haidas. The fishing boats down at the docks sported a few small symbols. "Medecine Man" had a small Haida insignia on the woodwork. Another boat had a thunderbird on the sail cover. A large black and white blowup of Marilyn Monroe curtained the win-

dow of another.

The Queen Charlotte Islands Museum was opened in May of 1976. A totem pole, more than 100 years old, from the Haida village of Skedans was raised at the opening ceremonies. The Haida gallery is accompanied by History (European settlement) and Natural History (plants and animals) galleries. Along with older utensils, kerf boxes and hats, many argillite carvings were exhibited, and the Haida carvers listed:

1. Captain Andrew Brown
Masset
1879-1962
2. Robert George Collison
Masset
3. Robert Davidson, Sr.
Masset
1885-1969
4. Joe Edgars
Masset
5. Patrick McGuire
Skidegate
1943-1970
6. Lewis Collinson
Skidegate
1881-1970
7. Arthur Moody
Skidegate
1888-1967
8. Henry Young
Skidegate
1874-1966
9. William Gladstone
Skidegate
1909-1965
10. Charles Gladstone
Skidegate

- 1877-1954
11. Henry Hans
Skidegate
1940-1967
12. Ike Hans
Skidegate
1892-1961
13. Tim Pearson
Skidegate
1888-1961
14. Ed Calder
Skidegate
1901-1976

Just beyond the museum lay Skidegate Mission, the southern home of the Haida. On the point, a decaying and moss-covered pole stood outside a recently built longhouse. A modern totem pole carved by Bill Reid pierced the sky as it ascended from the front face of the longhouse. It overlooked a squally sea. The building housed the Skidegate Band Council offices. The official opening was June 10 - 11, 1978. Literature published at that time stated:

It may be that the dedication of this structure is an important occasion, not just for the three hundred or so Haidas of Skidegate; but for the whole coastal community. For it is the first time that a building of true architectural value has been built by a native community to serve its own present day needs. It is also the first time that a significant structure based in the indigenous design of the area will be a vital part of today's world, and perhaps the first time in over

a hundred years that the full resources of the magnificent products of our coastal forests have been exploited, both artistically and structurally, to their full extent. (leaflet of The New Council Chambers, The Village of Skidegate, Queen Charlotte Islands, B.C.)

Rooms inside the longhouse surrounded a sunken meeting area, and each had a different Haida animal image on its door. We were looking for the band manager, Buddy. He wasn't in, so we waited indoors. Winds were blowing up to 90 km/h, and the rain hadn't let up, so it was a good thing we could. It wasn't long before we were in the midst of helping the community decorate for their big Christmas party. "Are you busy? Can you help us?" Men and boys had been up the mountain to cut cedar boughs. We trimmed them, arranged them and attached red velvet ribbons, "that had been specially ordered in from Sears." "This is exactly what I had in mind. Do you think it should be here or higher? Where should we put these ones? Are they balanced?" Bing Crosby and Nana Mouskouri were singing their Christmas songs over the tape deck. The roast smelled delicious. Two women were knitting. You could smell the wool. The men brought in chairs, moved tables and put a bucket

under a drip that leaked through the roof. They talked about the drip for a while, then strung the outdoor lights around the entrance.

Buddy arrived. Our questions took only a minute. Then we headed out, down the road to the graveyard. It was enclosed with barbed wire and was littered with mounds of faded plastic flowers. One or two of the gravestones had a bird, a beaver or a squirrel carved on top, but most were simple geometric shapes. The names were Moody, Taite, Davidson, Morley and Collinson.

There were always bald eagles soaring overhead, or perched on crags. Ravens cawed.

Ghenia, an airbrush and watercolor artist from eastern Canada, ran the Tlell River Arts shop. She had prints of Markgraf, the Group of Seven and the impressionists. Things were quiet: "Nobody's buying art this Christmas. Everybody's broke."

The Queen Charlotte City Library had no books on Haidas. Art books there were on the shelves covered the old masters, the impressionists and the cubists.

Alfred Adams let us into the museum in Haida.

The last visitors, according to the guest book, had been through on November 9. It was December 17. We chatted briefly with the teenage boy.

My father and the Davidson's sell.
I carve, too.
A lot of people carve around here.

As we left the museum we saw two painted totem poles standing in a park.

Victor Adams greeted us warmly, and let us peruse the display cases:

It doesn't cost anything to touch.
[laughs]

I usually work in silver or wood.
But it takes lots of time. I
work full-time for the
government too.

I'm too old now; there's not enough
time.

In another three years I think I'll
quit.

No one's buying now. Business
has been pretty slow this
Christmas.

I bought some gold. I shouldn't
have. Now it's just in
stock.

I started an argillite pole--
six inches--that someone wanted
for Christmas. But I haven't
worked in argillite for two
years. You get dirty, and if
you have to do something
else, you're so dirty.

I was invited to the argillite
opening in Calgary [viz.
Carol Sheehan's show at the
Glenbow Museum]. I got an

invitation, but I got it too late and couldn't go. I think it was right after the mail strike.

Victor spoke often of his six children and nine grandchildren. His daughter did basketweaving and played basketball. His son, Frank, made silk-screen cards occasionally: "He could do anything if he set his mind to it."

He invited us into the family recreation room, which adjoined the gallery. It was obvious that art played an important role in the Adams' life. Display cases of silver bracelets, rings and brooches, and argillite carvings lined the walls. Wood carvings and prints hung on any remaining wall space. Driftwood from Martha's Vineyard was varnished to make lamp stands. The lamp shades were strips of leather sewn together. Killer whale tail flukes supported a glass table top, and then merged into the body and head of the mammal.

Tons of bleached driftwood were piled and protruding at all angles on Jungle Beach. A logger, Ted Bellis, had taken his chain saw to some of its stumps and transformed them into an eagle, a bear and a beaver. He did it because he wanted to.

That's all. One was vandalized so he went and made another. Contemporary tools and symbols were acceptable to Ted for carving.

I was down on the beach with my boys and we wondered what the infamous middle finger would look like. So we thought we'd try it. We were just fooling around.

Some guy thought I was giving him a personal message so he sawed it off.

So half the people around here were upset with the obscene message; the other half were mad that he chopped it off. [he laughs easily and heartily]

I carved a golfer at the golf course. The guy didn't even thank me. He said, "There's a lot more stumps around here." [he laughs again]

Did a big fish for M and B [viz. MacMillan Bloedel pulp and paper company] which wasn't that great. A smaller one I did for a friend of mine was good.

I haven't been doing much carving since the spring, though--not since we've been working to fix up this bloody campground.

Ted's house was cluttered with art works.

Indian prints and carvings were around. A personalized ceramic ashtray, with images of a hard hat, chain saw and a stump, was the gift of a friend.

He spoke freely of art and the artistic impulse:
"Everyone has some artistic or creative bent in
 them. You're born with it if you're an Indian.
 Everyone can carve." When the comment was made that
 everyone seemed to be a carver or know a carver or
 be interested in art, Ted replied strongly: "Isn't
 that the way it is with everyone? It's the way it
 should be." He went on:

You know these carvers, they gotta
 use all their senses. They
 took the work of this young
 fellow, Billy, my nephew,
 17 years old--and they felt
 it all, looked at it and
 smelled it, like this. [he
 demonstrates; he laughs]
 I don't know what they get
 out of smelling it!

My son's building a log house.
 I'm helping him. He's such
 a bloody perfectionist. And
 I'm not. I don't understand
 the way he does things some-
 times. It's really an art to
 him, you know. There's not
 many log cabins around.

We had been well-fed, and conversation had
 been easy and interesting. As we left, in pot-
 latch style, Ted loaded us with four cans of home-
 preserved salmon, two t-shirts (on which were
 printed the phrases, "Skidegate is the exact center
 of the universe"), two pairs of logging gloves and
 a can of homemade Christmas pudding.

Our last stop was at Claude and Sarah Davidson's workshop in Haida. Claude and his son, Reg, had done most of the prints which were for sale. Mrs. Adams was minding the gallery. She made baskets out of spruce root, and weavings. She did some argillite carving too.

I think I did an argillite pole in August. I can't remember. I don't have time now. All my family is home. I have three boys and one girl. My nephew gave me these gold raven earrings.

On the flight home we spoke with Marg Sinclair, a teacher at Queen Charlotte School. She was, like all the other teachers, an "import." She had come from Sault Ste. Marie to do her first year teaching. The art projects on the walls looked like those one might see in any B.C. public school--snowmen with cotton batting, wax resists with a white wash, chalk drawings of winter scenes, cutout snowflakes. Though the majority of the students were Haidas, Haida art techniques and content were not taught in the school. If children did their traditional art, they did it at home. There were no art courses given at the Skidegate longhouse.

Lorna Reid was an art teacher in a Victoria highschool (Esquimalt area) which accomodated a

large percentage of native students. She did not teach native art: "They work on their own, if they're pursuing their traditional art styles." She told of a native Indian teacher in the school who was carving cedar panels with the students--native style. Anyone was encouraged to participate.

Upon reflection on a string of recorded visits, conversations and experiences such as the preceding ones, it becomes apparent that though art is not largely visible in the community, it is still a phenomenon in the Haida culture. If not, as George MacDonald states, even "a strong cultural revival," which parallels cultural revivals in other cultures across the world, such as the Maori [Polynesian people of New Zealand] and the Ainu [indigenous Caucasoid people who survive in limited numbers in Hokkaido, Japan] (December, 1981).

Art continues to be a priority for the Haida.

There seems to be a general awareness of its existence, and a sense that creativity is widespread among most of the community. As informal and non-directed as each encounter was, art seemed to become the most natural content of conversation.

Haidas knew about art, cited examples of it, and spoke of artists they knew and/or knew about.

Art has survived. There is much other contemporary evidence that this is so. A school of Indian art, 'Ksan, was founded north of Hazelton, B.C. in 1970. There are over two hundred carvers and printmakers working in various parts of B.C. Some are Haidas (egs. Bill Reid, Robert Davidson, Rufus Moody, Francis Williams). Poles are being raised again. Many were erected along B.C. highways in 1966 to commemorate a centennial. Rufus Moody carved a 50-inch argillite pole to commemorate Indian heritage in Canada (see Figure 25). It was commissioned by the government and now stands in the parliamentary Commonwealth Room in Ottawa. In the summer of 1969, Davidson carved and raised a new pole in his native village of Masset. This was the first pole to go up in the Queen Charlottes since 1884.

Potlatches have been held (the ban was lifted in 1951). Feasts and ceremonies have been more frequent. Thomas Hopkins recounts Robert Davidson's "homegrown celebration of his native heritage in his own home town" (1980, p. 58). Davidson reintroduced the ways of his ancestors.



Figure 25. Rufus Moody with centennial argillite carving. (Gunn, 1967, p. 10)

Robert Davidson, tall and slightly stooped, stood nervously onstage at the Old Masset community hall, fidgeting while two old women sang a Haida song to thank him for organizing last month's four-day festival of traditional dancing, eating and storytelling. In the audience flashbulbs popped to record the moment and kids and scrawny dogs weaved between the legs of 200 Haida and a scattering of whites. Minutes later a group of Haida men and women performed a nervous but enthusiastic version of the dimly remembered Eagle dance. It was obviously their first time, but Davidson's finely carved masks and headpieces added authenticity and stirred the memories of older men and women who hadn't seen the dance since their youth. When they finished the crowd cheered as if their hometown basketball team had just won the championship. (Hopkins, 1980, p. 58)

New art forms are emerging. Haida artists are synthesizing traditional themes, values and techniques with new media. They are exploring silkscreen, two-dimensional painting and graphics, film, radio and television drama, theatre and music. Haida dance groups, like the Tuul Gandlass Xyaalaa (Rainbow Creek Dancers) of Masset, have been formed. They have performed both in the Queen Charlottes and internationally. In the early 1970's native-run art schools and cooperatives sprang up. Twentieth century Haida are, with renewed vitality and imagination, actively creating their own unique

cultural environment.

Although the public educational system has not been successful in perpetuating the Haida artistic heritage, natives themselves have assumed the role of art educators and are passing their skills on by apprenticeship. Mrs. Rosie Ross, a Lillooet tribe member, lives on a reserve 100 miles north of Vancouver. She is a cheerful, rotund grandmother of 61 whose facile fingers turn cedar roots and straw into handsome, useful baskets. She teaches her craft to the younger generations who will learn.

A sense of timelessness surrounds the basket making; Rosie Ross's ancestors used the same materials, found in the same places, for baskets made in the same way. Each movement of the hands, each twist of root or bark has been handed down through the generations. It's still being handed on. "I start making baskets when I marry at 18," Rosie says. "I make maybe a thousand baskets. We make a lot to sell but also to use, for berry picking, for carrying babies. I teach my girls, and now my little granddaughter is learning too."

Francis Williams, Haida artist, learned the magic of art making by spending hours and hours watching at Arthur Adams' side:

I used to visit him just to watch him carve. He used to fascinate me. How did this guy do it? I

used to sit and watch him for hours and hours and ask him questions. The first thing he made me do, he said, "I want this design redrawn." So I redrew it for him. I didn't know what I was doing, really, but it looked nice. It was the first thing I did. The next thing he made me draw a design on metal, a piece of metal he was going to carve. I did that. Then I began to cut out for him, just the basics and he taught me the gauges to get and the temper. (Langlois, 1976, p. 77)

Observation of the process of creating art objects serves to educate. Education originates, as well, from the art object itself. The Haida art-maker learns his craft and his expression by looking at an art piece, by watching a master art-maker "make," by copying, by modelling and then by looking and watching again. His learning results from a prolonged inspection of the work of the forefathers and a watchful absorption of the process of the present-day masters. Imitative activity then follows.

In an interview with W. J. Langlois, Williams relates his experience upon viewing native artifacts at the Provincial Museum in Victoria:

I was fascinated by the old artifacts. They just had a small display at the time. I used to go up there and look at the Edenshaw bracelets, I couldn't believe it.

My God, I've got to do this ... some day. I've got to keep working. And finally they let me up into the curatorial tower and I was just amazed at the number of artifacts they had: masks, the rattles, the horn spoons, the slate boxes. (Langlois, 1976, p. 77)

The more I saw this art form, the more beautiful it was. Every time I went back and looked at the same pieces I saw different things that I hadn't seen before. And it slowly, slowly started to get into my head that this is the proper way to design. I began to recognize various tribes. Every tribe has a different distinct style and I can pretty well tell you which tribe did this. (Langlois, 1976, p. 77)

For Francis Williams, learning to be an art-maker is inextricably linked with seeing and contemplating master art works:

No I didn't actually learn anything in Masset because there was really no art form there anymore. I had to go all these thousands of miles to find my culture standing in this museum. A lot of people back there don't even realize the culture we have. They say, "Oh yeah, we're Haidas. We were great. We had a great art form." But they don't really see it! They don't see it at all. They say, "Well, we made big beautiful canoes," and all this. But, when you think of the work and the skill that went into making massive war canoes, right down to the intricate littlest horn spoons that are so intricate! They look like they were poured plastic. Well, in them days we, that is, us Haidas, didn't con-

sider it an art form. I don't think there's a word for art in Haida, as such. But it was a way of life, see. When you had a chief--like he had his carvers--he wanted the best carvers. So they started this long line of apprenticeship. A little boy showed interest, and he was a toddler, well he was encouraged to stay with the carvers. Naturally he grew up with it and by the time he was 15 he could just about do anything. You know, like, depending on his skill. (Langlois, 1976, p. 78)

Francis Williams is not the only Haida artist for whom art has served as a resource for learning. "Bill Reid and Bob Davidson have turned back to museum collections to relearn the subtleties of the traditional designs" (Smyly & Smyly, 1973, p. 12). Bill Reid learned the origins of the art process and the basic rules governing Haida stylistic techniques by, first, looking at traditional art in museums and books. Next, he copied and he imitated. Then he carried it further and developed a unique form of expression.

It was in Vancouver in the early 1950's that Reid himself fell under the influence of Charles Edenshaw's works, which he admits to having "shamelessly copied." But it was this very copying and careful study of the works of that "Old Master" of the Haidas which communicated to Reid "something of the underlying dynamics

of Haida art which later permitted me to design more original pieces while still staying within the tradition." (Vastokas, 1975, p. 17)

Reid is also very sensitive to the fact that this renewal, this native renaissance of West Coast art, including his own development as a jeweller, began in a truly academic, antiquarian fashion, that is, by copying museum pieces. (Vastokas, 1975, p. 19)

Without the art object, art-makers have no teacher:

There are a lot of young artists developing now, a lot in Masset, a lot in Skidegate. But they're starting like I started. They're starting blind, like, they've never had any real instruction, tutoring, in the art form. And looking at all their work ... Like, I can remember when I went through that stage of not understanding how to design. (Langlois, 1976, p. 79)

With it, they do:

Students of Northwest Coast art forms, Indian and non-Indian alike, began learning about the images as well as the history of the art from ethnographic and historical texts and old photographs. Perhaps most significant of all, many Northwest Coast artists learned about the scope and depth of their important legacy through first-hand experiences visiting galleries, museums, and large private collections. Native art programmes in various Canadian museums were developed especially to enhance more than

the museums' collections and attractions. They provided (and in some cases still provide) viable forums for the remnants of traditional artistic knowledge to be continued as apprentice artists working with masters. These programmes also provided a measure of economic stability that combined with a certain amount of discipline and guidance, encouraged the growth of individual artists. The result was a slow but steady revival of the arts of the Northwest Coast that began with copying old forms until enough competence and confidence in the elements of classical design was reached. But the resurgence was more than a renaissance in the conventional sense of a return to classical times; rather, it was a time of heightened interest in understanding the past as a guide to the future, a time of original innovations on traditional artistic themes and media. (Sheehan, 1981, pp. 119 - 120)

As the previous quote points out, there are other frameworks for art learning, besides contemplation of the art object. Art-makers learn by study and apprenticeship in art schools. They are influenced by academic criticism and evaluation of what Haida art was, is, and/or should be (egs. Northwest Coast Indian Art: A Dialogue on Craftsmanship and Aesthetics, 1975 - B. Holm & B. Reid, Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form, 1965 - B. Holm). Vocabularies are established and become "a style manual for understanding as well

as creating northern Northwest Coast design" (Sheehan, 1981, p. 122).

Inspiration for images may spring from either memory or present-day experiences.

George MacDonald has referred to the Haida culture as a "memory culture." Art, then, becomes a representation of that memory. Art as visualized memory began simultaneously with the fading of the culture--a recording of remembrances in black slate:

No longer able to see or participate as members of an active tradition, the artists of the early years of the fourth period reproduced memories of images that represented meanings no longer current and rapidly fading. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 118)

It continues today to serve the same purpose and to arise from storehouses of reminiscence.

Present-day experiences, in the context of a Haida cultural revival, are also image sources. For example, Reg Davidson's "The Eagle Dancer" celebrates a personal experience of feast and dance:

Many of the artists are finding inspiration for their sculpture in written documents of the past, but an increasing number of young Haida are finding images in their own lives to translate readily into argillite sculpture and other arts. The revival of elaborate ceremonials, the renewed interest in Haida language, song

and dance, and the stimulation of recognition within Haida communities as well as in international centers has influenced the creation of new images of cultural experience. For example, two Haida artists, Reg Davidson and Ron Wilson (Git-sgah), have translated the dramatic experience of contemporary Haida dance in argillite .. Wilson's sculpture depicts the spiritual transformation of the dancer; the blanketed dancer has human hands and limbs, though the face and feet have been transformed into animal forms. The Reg Davidson sculpture "The Eagle Dancer" is a self-portrait, containing all the elegance and vitality of the dance he first performed, at the 1980 feast sponsored by his brother, Robert. The feast took place on the Spring Equinox and was called "A Celebration of the Living Haida." The artist, the sculptural theme, the ceremony, the expressions of confidence in the future are all projections of a contemporary Haida reality. The Eagle Dance holds great meaning for Reg Davidson; when he decided to carve an argillite sculpture to be included in the Pipes That Won't Smoke; Coal That Won't Burn exhibition, he chose the dancer image, "because I wanted people to see something that had a purpose and a real meaning for me." (Sheehan, 1981, pp. 124 - 126) (see Figures 26 and 27)

Francis Williams' discussion, in particular, highlights a significant role that art has played through the centuries--that of educator. Contem-



Figure 26. "Eagle Dancer: A Self-Portrait" by Reg Davidson, 1981. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 125)



Figure 27. Reg Davidson performing the Eagle Dance. (Sheehan, 1981, p. 127)

plation of form and imitation of it have been and are essential learning activities. Art forms themselves have been the resource for Haida art-makers. Re-creation of the past, followed by reinterpretation in the present have allowed art to be a process of self-discovery as well as an expression of innovation. Art serves as a resource for direct copy, a springboard for derivatives in style and iconography, and always as a root for new expressions which are innovative in form and technique.

Art, in its traditional and contemporary forms, has been, for the Haida art-viewer, a provider of cultural awareness and identity. It has educated, by recounting old legends and communicating images to generations who would otherwise never have known them. Art viewing has been a discovery of the past as well as an exposure to a living art form. Bill Reid's work on a reconstructed Haida village on the University of British Columbia's campus attempted to achieve this end for Haida and white alike. He salvaged totem poles from his mother's home islands, and with Kwagiutl carver, Douglas Cranmer, carved two mortuary poles, three totem poles, a family house with interior carved post and an adjoining mortuary house.

The fact that [Reid] is working from a tradition that has long since lost most of its spiritual associations with its selected imagery only convinces Reid that his reshaping of traditional imagery will heighten the contemporary audience's awareness of the magical and timeless qualities held in the Haida's art imagery.
(Perry, 1978, p. 94)

Bill Reid suggests optimistically that art also serves as a bridge between Haida and white. It is a medium of communication. Contemporary Haida art "does provide a means of dialogue between the two communities, the Indian and the white. That the Indians can say quite clearly and definitely that we are not extinct and we have something to say and we have our own particular kind of excellence which compares in every way with yours and we can trade this back and forth" (Maranda & Watt, 1976, p. 37). Hume agrees with Reid's metaphor, art as communicator.

It takes a long time to break down walls. If the results of the European arrival in North America are to be understood, it must be in terms of the clash between opposing cultures--one, oral and intuitive, the other, literal and mechanical. The visual arts alone have allowed some limited communication. (Hume, 1979, p. 28)

From a commercial point of view, Haida art is also a commodity. Some see it simply as a hybrid born of two environments, Haida and white, which

is supplied to meet a demand:

Indian arts and crafts are present-day products which have evolved directly or indirectly from old native forms, and which have enjoyed a continued development because of a demand for them in the larger culture. White men have been buying useful Indian wares and "curios" since the time of first contact, and continue to do so. Although these are removed from their original native contexts, they still find uses in the modern home. Indian arts such as wood carving are much in demand by modern interior decorators. Their appeal lies partly in their identification with the Indians and with the local region, but it is also the appeal of skilled hand craftsmanship in an age of standardized machine-made products ... Since it is in the larger culture that these crafts are actually used, and since the demand from the larger culture influences their forms, they are just as much products of the material culture of modern North America as they are products of Indian culture. (Duff, 1965, pp. 76 - 77)

Others believe contemporary art is simply an attempt to re-invent Indians. And because of the rarity of criticism about the art, the attitude that "Haida is good, good is Haida" facilitates a decline in artistic quality and accountability.

Bill Reid comments on the commercial issue with realism, but with hope:

I'm a little bit worried about some of the stuff from time to time. I think a lot of it tends to be a little surfacy and decorative. I don't think we can ever recapture the spiritual or ceremonial impact of the work in the old days, but I think even then it was also an individual expression as well as being an expression of the tribal area, the separate groups of people who lived on the Coast. It contained something of the spirit of the individual who made it as well as the people he was working for, and this I find a little bit lacking in a lot of things. Sometimes in the most beautifully designed pieces you see these days, you feel this kind of coldness and emptiness in the way it's done. Maybe because everybody is young and hasn't had enough experience of what life is all about I suppose. (Maranda & Watt, 1976, p. 37)

Acknowledging roots that go down deep into the Haida past, but also pursuing the vision of personal growth, Haida artists create a contemporary Haida art. As Robert Davidson, a young Haida artist, put it, "The only way tradition can be carried on is to keep inventing new things" (Carpenter, 1977, p. 27)

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Art as Educator

... "Be patient, grandson," the stranger said, "Soon we will put our limbs together and wrestle. Now we will come out and try our strength." And they laid hold of each other. Then the stranger pushed him around and almost threw him down. Then he turned away, smiling, and said, "Grandson, your spirit is stronger. Swim down the inlet now." (Haida legend)

Art's roles, past and present, are varied. Some have changed; others have remained. The key to the survival and ongoingness of Haida art, however, is the role that art has played as educator. The art object informs on, and perpetuates itself, as the art-maker responds to it. The art-maker is a living manifestation of the realities and transformations of his culture, and brings this to the creative dialogue. Without the art object and the art-maker in interaction--one informing on the other in an educative process--Haida art would indeed have died. Haida artists, such as Francis Williams, Bill Reid and Bob Davidson, confirm that this is so.

Art educated its people in the past--teaching them of their values, beliefs and mythology. It recorded the content of a culture, and expressed it. Art educates its people in the present--teaching them the same. It records the content of a culture, with all the realities of its vicissitudes and transformations, and expresses them.

The art works had a prominent and decidedly pragmatic role in this culture since they were central to the elaborate and important ceremonial activities. That this role persists today, despite the decline of most aspects of Northwest Coast culture, is, in part, a testament to the importance of art to these Indians. (Carpenter, 1977, p. 26)

If this process of art education is to continue, then the art works of the Haida need to continue to be restored, preserved and created. Museums and private collections have not simply performed a death watch over the remains of a culture, they have preserved the sources of an artistic renaissance.

That art has survived has meaning. It has somehow been an ongoing necessity to the Haida. That the role of art as educator has been an enduring one in Haida culture--past and present--has significance in explaining that survival.

Art is, as it were, the re-enactment of a myth--a myth that embodies "a complex system of coherent affirmations about the ultimate reality of things, a system that can be regarded as constituting a metaphysics" (Eliade, 149/1954, p. 3). Objects, experiences, life itself, have value and meaning only as they allow for the symbol, the myth or the rite to be the contemporary translation of previously established archetypes. The Haida art-maker denies the meaninglessness of profane existence as the myth of the eternal return is re-enacted in his art.

It is more probable that the desire felt by the man of traditional societies to refuse history, and to confine himself to an indefinite repetition of archetypes, testifies to his thirst for the real and his terror of "losing" himself by letting himself be overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of profane existence. (Eliade, 1949/ 1954, pp. 91 - 92)

The myth that is transmitted through Haida art has content and meaning. An understanding of its re-enactment is an intuitive process, and any attempt to enclose the myth in an explicit definition would be to deny its very nature as a myth. But it is legitimate to probe, to begin to search, for some revelatory glimpses.

Some of art's meaning, as resident in both the art object and the art process, is articulated in its roles as educator, provider of cultural awareness and identity, communicator and commodity. As educator, art teaches art-makers a skill and a technique. (It teaches design principles, stylistic elements and aesthetic value. As provider of cultural awareness and identity, communicator and commodity, it serves a variety of other specific purposes among present-day Haida.

Ron Wilson's art making is a hobby. He enjoys giving and/or selling his creations to friends and neighbors. He is not interested in making it a

business. Victor Adams seems more concerned with the commercial aspects of his trade. But art obviously has personal significance, as well, in the decoration of his home. Mrs. Adams carves if she has time.

For Ted Bellis, art making is fun. It is a part of him. It is a way of sharing common experiences with family members (egs. carving on the beach, building a log cabin). He thinks everyone should express their creativity somehow. Francis Williams has a burning need to create. Art making is a challenge he has to meet.

Through his art, Robert Davidson consciously aims to reintroduce the ways of his ancestors to his people. Bill Reid and Reg Davidson desire to communicate with the world; they desire to translate in visual form the realities and the dynamics of all that is Haida.

A more generalized meaning for art is bound up in the "essential mystery" (Evans, 1973, p. xi) that is infused into the Haida culture, the individual sensibilities of its people and into the art works of its art-makers. This mystery defies reductive analysis, but because it is intrinsic in all Haida myths, a partial discovery of patterns is possible.

Excerpts from the myth "Sacred One Both Still and Moving" (see prefaces to chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8) will serve as illustration. The passage which opens chapter 5 speaks of the ephemeral and the elusive. Sacred One Both Still and Moving attempts to grasp that which is changing. It becomes "a beautiful transparent thing." He dons the mysterious trapping of a supernatural power. A channel is traced. A permanent marking is left (chapter 6). Happenings do not follow one another logically. A grandfather appears, and strikes this "elder brother" until he is broken and humbled (chapter 7). But the discipline results in a coming of age, rather than a permanent defeat. The transition period has been endured. Meaning, hope and courage are re-established: "Grandson, your spirit is stronger. Swim down the inlet now." The myth is re-enacted.

A bigger myth, a continuous thread through traditional and contemporary times is the archetype for all Haida myths. Inherent in it are the eternal qualities that are, as previously mentioned, infused into Haida culture and myth, into the individual sensibilities of its people and the art works of its art-makers. The bigger myth speaks of transformation and of process. In it there is no bondage.

to past, present or future, though all are significant. It speaks respectfully of family members and relationships. It speaks of essential mysteries that refuse the limitations of words.

Among the Haida Indians of the Queen Charlotte Islands, a myth has remained intact. It has returned in art. The art re-enacts the mysteries and the truths, the transformations and the realities of a people. It educates the Haida art-maker in the content and meanings of his culture and his art.

Reference Note¹

The creative act which gives rise to myths is in fact exactly the reverse of that which gives rise to works of art. In the case of works of art, the starting point is a set of one or more objects and one or more events which aesthetic creation unifies by revealing a common structure. Myths travel the same road but start from the other end. They use a structure to produce what is itself an object consisting of a set of events (for all myths tell a story). Art thus proceeds from a set (object + event) to the discovery of its structure. • Myth starts from a structure by means of which it constructs a set (object + event). (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1962, p. 25)

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 - Children of the Raven
 - Heritage Gallery of Indian Art
 - Hill's Indian Crafts
 - Museum of Anthropology, U.B.C.
 - Norman Tait - Northwest Coast Indian Gallery
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 - a. Adams, Alfred - Haida, artist's son
Thursday, December 17
10 minutes
in museum, Haida
 - b. Adams, Mrs. - Haida
Thursday, December 17
5 minutes
in workshop of Claude and Sarah Davidson,
Haida
 - c. Adams, Victor - Haida artist, government
worker
Thursday, December 17
45 minutes
in display gallery and in den/living room,
Haida
 - d. Bellis, Ted - Haida logger, carver
Thursday, December 17
4 hours
in his home, Tlell
 - e. Ellis, Bill - Haida
Tuesday, December 15
15 minutes
in Percy Gladstone's hospital room, Q.C.C.
(Queen Charlotte City)

- f. Ghenia - White, artist
Wednesday, December 16
10 minutes
in Tlell River Arts shop, Tlell
- g. Gladstone, Percy - Haida, semi-chief status
Tuesday, December 15
2 hours
in his hospital room, Q.C.C.
- h. Hibbie, Crazy - White, old-timer
Tuesday, December 15
5 minutes
in hospital room, Q.C.C.
- i. Hunter, Andrea - White, hospital administra-
tor
Tuesday, December 15
20 minutes
in hospital administration office, Q.C.C.
- j. MacDonald, George - White, Museum of Anthro-
pology, U.B.C.
Friday, December 11
90 minutes
his office at the Museum of Anthropology,
U.B.C.
- k. MacDonald, Sybil - White, old-timer
Tuesday, December 15
5 minutes
in Percy Gladstone's hospital room, Q.C.C.
- l. Members of the Skidegate band - Haida
Wednesday, December 16
1 hour
in the Skidegate longhouse, Skidegate
- m. Reid, Lorna - White, art teacher in Victoria,
B.C.
Wednesday, December 23
30 minutes
in a friend's home, Vancouver
- n. Serge - White, old-timer
Tuesday, December 15
1 hour
in airport limo while travelling from airport
to Q.C.C.

- o. Sinclair, Margaret - White, teacher in Q.C.C.
Friday, December 18
30 minutes
in airplane
- p. Wilson, Ron - Haida
Tuesday, December 15
10 minutes
in his car, between Skidegate and Q.C.C.