

visual imagery and form, the extensive array of representations of the several genre of the souvenir-art form are crucial to her ability to make her points. Accordingly, this volume is copiously illustrated with over 200 black-and-white images and a glo-

rious central collection of thirty-eight colour plates that celebrate the beauty and complexity of the commoditized objects of art. Simply put, this is a thought-provoking and groundbreaking study.

### *Solitary Raven: The Selected Writings of Bill Reid*

Robert Bringhurst, editor

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JOEL MARTINEAU

*University of British Columbia*

THE HAIDA ARTIST Bill Reid (1920-98) is arguably Canada's most renowned sculptor. Among his monumental works are the partial replica of a Haida village at the University of British Columbia (UBC); the band council housepole in Skidegate, the first pole raised in the village in a century; *The Raven and the First Men*, the large yellow cedar representation of a Haida creation myth that has become the signature piece of the Museum of Anthropology at UBC; *Chief of the Undersea World*, his cast bronze sculpture of a killer whale located at the Vancouver Aquarium; and *Loo Taa*, the 15.7-metre canoe featured at Expo '86, paddled to Skidegate in 1987, and later paddled up the Seine to Paris. Reid's greatest sculpture is *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*, installed at the Canadian Embassy in Washington in 1991. A replica, *The Jade Canoe*, graces the departure lounge of the Vancouver Airport.

Reid was raised in Hyder and Victoria without knowing that his

mother was Haida. Only as an adult, about to embark on a career with CBC Radio, did he visit Haida Gwaii and discover that his lineage included several great carvers. He made his life's ambition the exploration of art and of his cultural heritage. First, he acquired European, technical jeweller's skills. Then, he steeped himself in the vision of Haida artistic tradition. Finally, he transcended cultural boundaries to create art for all. As Reid matured and his art gained acclaim, he assumed an active role articulating Aboriginal rights. In the 1970s and 1980s, when Haida allied with preservationists to wage a thirteen-year campaign to save the southern portion of Haida Gwaii from clear-cut logging, Reid contributed to their cause as both fundraiser and advocate. Who will forget the March 1987 headline in the *Vancouver Sun*: "Haida Artist Abandons Carving for Embassy"? Reid informed the federal government: "I'm not prepared to enhance your international reputation when you treat my people

badly" (Ar). Only when the various levels of government agreed to preserve the South Moresby wilderness area did Reid resume work on *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*.

Most of the thirty pieces collected in *Solitary Raven* mark significant junctures in Reid's artistic career. Three are from the 1950s. The first recounts the awe Reid experienced as he participated in an expedition that salvaged several Haida housepoles from abandoned villages on southern Haida Gwaii. He argues that the removal was "necessary" to arrest the decay of these "beautiful, tragic reminders of a romantic past" so that they could be preserved in Victoria and Vancouver, where "contemporary carvers" could make exact replicas (39, 41). In the second and third pieces he begins to refine that initial awe, turning it into his argument that the finest Native art of the Northwest Coast "ranks with that of any fine artist past or present, anywhere in the world" (55). Two pieces from the 1960s anticipate Reid's theory that the sea shaped the form, lines, and symmetry that Native artists channelled into "the matchless grace of the Northwest Coast canoe" (61). Eight writings from the 1970s vary in form and purpose: a long poem relates Haida masterworks to the culture that produced them; an autobiographical essay describes the life journey that led to his retrospective exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery; a brief piece philosophizes about the plurality of truths; another eulogizes Wilson Duff; a

lecture delivered at UBC expands his treatment of the formline and ovoid; and the essay "Haida Means Human Being" pleads for respect between races. Fourteen pieces from the 1980s reflect Reid's artistic maturity. He leverages the wisdom gained during his decades of immersion in Northwest Coast artistic traditions and the esteem that his monumental artworks had earned into influential statements about environmental responsibilities, Department of Indian Affairs policy, Native land claims, appropriation, cultural regeneration, and the roles of academics in the preservation of Aboriginal cultures. In the final piece, written in 1991, Reid provides delightfully humorous, thought-provoking notes that describe the occupants of the great bronze canoes, *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii* and *The Jade Canoe*.

*Solitary Raven* will be a delight for aficionados of Bill Reid's art, whether their interests are primarily aesthetic, historical, literary, or political. Robert Bringhurst's introduction and notes, and Martine Reid's afterword, add to the warmth of spirit (or raven-like playfulness) that imbues Reid's writing and seems so consistent with his sculptures. The book is generously illustrated, with some three dozen black-and-white photographs, six colour plates, and more than two dozen reproductions of manuscript pages and drawings. It includes a chronology and bibliography. The publishers should be proud of this book and the reasonable price at which it is available.