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By Douglas C. Ewing, with essays by Craig Bates and Ted J. Brassler.

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**Pleasing the Spirits: A Catalogue of a Collection of American Indian Art.** By Douglas C. Ewing, with essays by Craig Bates and Ted J. Brassler. New York: Ghylen Press, 1982. 401 pp. 479 black and white illustrations. 47 color illustrations. \$90.00 Cloth.

As its sub-title states, *Pleasing the Spirits* is the catalogue of a private collection of Native American art. Unfortunately, Douglas Ewing's introductory essay provides little insight into the philosophy behind the formation of this collection. Instead Ewing tells us that it is "important to distinguish between . . . a 'collection' and a mere assemblage of objects [because] the former offers opportunities for insights, inferences and at least tentative conclusions, while the latter offers few, if any" (11). He continues to explain that "the formation of a collection requires three essential elements: a plan, availability and action at the time of opportunity" (Ibid.). According to Ewing the "success" or "failure" of any collection can be measured by just these elements. For Ewing this collection "offers a classic illustration of this definition" (Ibid.). As Christian Feest (*American Indian Art Magazine*, 1984:69) has already pointed out, this kind of collection policy says more about the acquisitiveness of American society in the 1970s than it does about Native American art.

While this collection includes examples of Native American art from virtually all the major culture areas, there are some major gaps. For example, despite the importance of masking in at least four areas of North America, there are only three masks in the entire collection (catalogue numbers 61, 62, 64). On the other hand, weapons and tools appear in large numbers: 27 knives of various types, 16 clubs and tomahawks, 35 ladles and 11 bowls. Another 40 or so entries are devoted to pipe bowls, stems and related paraphernalia. In addition, a large number of objects come from the Eastern Woodlands or Plains areas, mainly from the nineteenth century.

Despite Ewing's stated intention that the "principal purpose of this catalogue is to increase the number of objects easily available for study and comparison . . ." (9), the catalogue itself is somewhat limited in its usefulness. One of the major problems is the often scanty catalogue information provided with each entry. Ewing himself points out the lack of reliable published data that can be used as comparative material for purposes of identification, then he proceeds to use that very data to substantiate

his own attributions. Ewings' references to already-published items will not be particularly useful to the serious scholar since he usually cites general publications that offer little new information. Specific information provided by specialists in each area or by other well-documented museum specimens would have been more helpful. Ewing does utilize this approach with at least one entry, catalogue number 221, a feather and bead belt from central California. In this entry he cites Craig Bates as the reference. However, since no reference to Bates appears in the bibliography, I assume that what is meant is either a personal communication with Bates or the introductory essay by Bates. However, since Bates (1981) contributed an article to the *American Indian Art Magazine* on "Feather Belts of Central California," it would have been helpful to include it in the bibliography. In addition the chart of other known similar belts has at least one major mistake in that it includes the two belts from Berlin twice, once under the Museum fur Volkerkunde and once under the Dahlem Museum (in fact, these are one and the same museum). Feest (op. cit.: 71) also points out that another belt collected by Colonel Kouprianoff in 1839 has been omitted, and the wrong museum numbers are given for the belts in Leningrad and Oxford.

In addition to the *Reference* section, Ewing has included separate *Notes* on certain entries. Some of these *Notes* provide new and important information while others simply reiterate information that should logically be included with the catalogue information (e.g., "Note: This type of pottery is known as 'Awatovi Black on Yellow'." for number 386, Bowl, Southwest, Arizona, Awatovi, c. 1300-1400 A.D.). Others of these *Notes* actually repeat what is obvious in the photography (e.g., "Note: The handle is in the form of a hand" for catalogue number 448 or "Note: The handle terminates in a carving in the form of a thumb" for catalogue number 449).

A third section sometimes included within the individual catalogue entries is a listing of previous owners under the heading *Ex Collection*. This category yields some interesting information about the origins of approximately one-third of the objects in this collection. For example, twenty-four objects were previously in the George C. Green collection, sixteen were once in the Museum of the American Indian-Heyle Foundation collections, ten come from the Brooklyn Museum and nine were collected by

Frank Speck (including one of the items at the Museum of the American Indian). Other objects with previous collection histories come from a variety of public and private collections (e.g., the Pitt Rivers Museum in England and the Speyer collection in Germany). Unfortunately, little in the way of first-hand documentation or collection data exists on many of these objects, thus, while it is interesting to know the previous owners, this section provides little other useful information.

One of the most frustrating problems in using this catalogue is the arrangement of the individual catalogue entries. There are several traditional methods that have been used to divide Native American art into workable categories. Perhaps the most frequently used is the culture-area method proposed by Alfred Kroeber in the late 1930s (*Cultural and Natural areas of Native North America*, 1939). Most of the catalogues of major museum collections (e.g., Richard Conn's *Native American Art in the Denver Art Museum*, 1979) as well as those accompanying major exhibitions of Native American art (e.g., *Sacred Circles* by Ralph T. Coe, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976; and *The Native American Heritage* by Evan Maurer, Chicago: The Art Institute, 1977) have used this method satisfactorily. While not perfect this format is probably the one with which most scholars are familiar and therefore most accustomed to using. Ewing, however, discarded this format for one of his own devising. The categories used in *Pleasing the Spirits* are: **Ritual and Medicine, Warfare and the Horse, Clothing and Personal Adornment and Domestic Life**. Within these categories similar objects are grouped together regardless of tribal affiliation. This does make it easier to compare similar objects from different tribes or geographic regions, but it makes it very difficult to compare different objects from the same tribe. In addition, if one does not remember under exactly what category an object is listed, it is exceedingly hard to find it again. This method also results in some strange divisions. For example, catalogue number 60, Feather Basket, California, Pomo, c. 1890 is included under the section heading **Ritual and Medicine**, while catalogue number 375, Basket, California, Pomo, c. 1890 (with red woodpecker feathers and quail top-knots) and 374, Basket, California, Pomo, c. 1890 (with glass trade beads) are included under the heading **Domestic Life**. Crooked knives are also listed under **Domestic Life**, while all other knives are found under **Warfare and the Horse**. Granted, certain types of objects are more fre-

quently used for utilitarian purposes, but the line between utilitarian use, use in battle and use in ritual or ceremony is often a fine one.

In addition to the catalogue entries, which comprise about 85 percent of the catalogue, there are two introductory essays by recognized scholars. The first article, by Ted Brasser, is an essay on Eastern Woodlands art entitled "Pleasing the Spirits: Indian Art around the Great Lakes." Brasser has worked in the Great Lakes area and is also the author of "*Bo'jou, Neejee!*", a catalogue of the Great Lakes material in the National Museum of Man, Ottawa, Canada (Brasser, 1976). Brasser's essay, while similar to the one in "*Bo'jou Neejee!*", does discuss a number of items in the collection, sometimes adding interesting bits of information that might otherwise have been missed. For example, in discussing the "self-directed" aspect of most Woodland designs, Brasser points out that objects such as the moccasins of catalogue number 275 were probably not made by Woodlands tribes because their overall pattern tends to be directed toward the viewer rather than the wearer (19). Unfortunately Brasser's essay is undocumented, making it difficult to obtain further information about such interesting phenomena as the "Black Dance" (22), which he mentions in conjunction with a number of quill-decorated black buckskin pouches (catalogue numbers 244 and 245).

A second essay, "Wealth and Power" by Craig Bates, deals with the feathered regalia of central California. Regrettably only a few of the items discussed by Bates are included in the collection (catalogue number 323, a pair of tremblers from the Pomo; catalogue number 324, a pair of Pomo ear plugs; catalogue number 221, a feather and shell belt from central California). The inclusion of current, topical essays within the catalogue format is one that appears to have started with the Walker Art Center's exhibition and catalogue, *American Indian Art: Form and Tradition* (1972). Subsequent catalogues, such as the Art Institute of Chicago's *The Native American Heritage: A Survey of North American Indian Art* (Evan Maurer, 1977), have continued this tradition. Considering the breadth of the *Pleasing the Spirits* collection, additional essays on topics such as pipes and their associated paraphernalia, clothing and weapons would have been welcome additions.

Since the publication of *Pleasing the Spirits* in 1982, two exhibitions of objects from this collection have been held in the

Michael C. Rockefeller Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The first of these was from March 25 to July 3, 1983 and was accompanied by a 25-page catalogue, *Color and Shape in American Indian Art* (1983) by Zena Pearlstone Mathews, a recognized authority on Iroquois pipes. Evan Maurer, author of *The Native American Heritage*, wrote an enthusiastic preview of the show for the Autumn 1982 issue of *American Indian Art Magazine*. Between February 28 and May 27, 1984 the Metropolitan Museum continued to exhibit objects from the *Pleasing the Spirits* collection. The accompanying catalogue, *Symbol and Substance in American Indian Art* (1984), also written by Zena Pearlstone Mathews, was similar in size and scope to the previous one.

While the publication and exhibition of both private and public collections is always a welcomed addition to the list of available material on Native American art, one could wish that the *Pleasing the Spirits* catalogue was organized into a more workable format. Nevertheless, it is helpful to have the entire collection published and available.

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