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In the political and legal environment of Canada, specifically British Columbia, although the government may be willing to listen to the First Nations' concerns, in practice it ultimately refuses to acknowledge their need for self-determination (including in matters concerning tribal identity), historical presence, and hunting, fishing, land, and mineral rights. Going to court is merely an exercise in futility, because no matter what is argued and sought by the First Nations, the atmosphere of hostility and the practice of discrimination perpetuate the subjugation of First Nations peoples. Although Armitage's concluding sentiment is hopeful, it is unrealistic. Even though intercultural interaction seems to be based on fairness, when the dominant culture decides how, when, and what fairness is, colonialism still reigns.

Frederick H. White

Eagle Transforming: The Art of Robert Davidson. By Ulli Steltzer and Robert Davidson. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994. 164 pages. \$39.95 cloth.

Eagle Transforming: The Art of Robert Davidson is the kind of book I would heartily recommend to anyone interested in the processes through which art makes the journey from idea and motivation to true artistry. Indeed, the cover photograph by coauthor/photographer Ulli Steltzer shows the artist and subject of the book, Robert Davidson, intently engaged in carving. This rich image provides an opening into a powerful and personal account of Davidson's development as an artist and a Haida man.

Davidson has enjoyed international recognition of his work, including a one-man show at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1993 and the publication of the show's catalog, *Eagle of the Dawn*. It would be wrong to think of *Eagle Transforming* as just a sidebar to the exhibition catalog. *Eagle Transforming* complements the catalog by providing some different approaches that the catalog does not. One example is the inclusion of Davidson's monumental work, such as totem poles, houseposts, and housefronts. Another is the photodocumentation of the artist at work over a span of more than twenty years, recording the development of his large pieces in stages from roughed-out logs to their placement *in situ*. Likewise, the photos show Davidson's masks from their beginnings in the workshop to their metamorphosis as adornment for

ceremonial dancers. These and other remarkable “mini-events” are delivered to the reader through Steltzer’s sharp, unobtrusive lens. The resultant images are also a tribute to her long friendship with Davidson.

The catalog of the Vancouver Art Gallery show mentioned above is meritorious and deserves its place as a definitive document of Davidson’s work up to this point. In addition to illustrating more than one hundred works in jewelry, wood and argillite sculpture, and silkscreen printing, the catalog contains fine essays by Aldona Jonaitis, Ian Thom, and Marianne Jones, and these essays are bordered with quotes by Davidson and other Haida artists and elders. One comes away with an appreciation for Davidson as a talented artist and leader in Haida cultural revival.

What makes *Eagle Transforming* stand out from the catalog and other publications is that Davidson’s own words cover forty of the fifty-two pages of text, providing insight into his artistic beginnings, his mentors, his motivations, and his processes. The seamless flow of his direct, sometimes emotional, soliloquy provides the dimension of Davidson the man—thoughtful, impassioned, and at every juncture involved in the business of being human. Indeed, the deeper significance of the title (beyond his membership in the Eagle clan) is not revealed until near the end of the book, when Davidson writes, “Eagle has become symbolic in my development as a person, and I’ve started to recognize that part of me” (p. 100–101). The reader is privileged to share in this odyssey through Davidson’s profound words and the exquisite images of his work.

Eagle Transforming begins with a brief statement by Davidson about the significance of art to the Haida people and the challenge of “re-creating” artforms that have long lain dormant. In this poignant reflection, Davidson touches on aspects of visual creativity that go beyond cultural boundaries—art as connection with one’s history, art as communication, and art as a well-crafted object to be appreciated for its intrinsic beauty. This is followed by an equally brief note by Ulli Steltzer, whose humble tone belies her contributions. She opens with the statement “This is Robert Davidson’s book” (p. iv) and, without effusion or pomp, communicates her respect for his extraordinary talent. Even if the reader is unaware of Steltzer’s other documentary books on native artistry and ceremony (*Indian Artists at Work*, 1978, and *A Haida Potlatch*, 1984), he or she can sense that a kind of magic has occurred here, one sensitive artist recording another. Although Steltzer’s presence in the book seems subtle (perhaps because we

have come to see photographic images as merely illustrative), the multidimensional way in which she captures Davidson is a tribute to her ability to document a single artist—one destined to become a leader, from journeyman to master carver. The combination is electric.

The book includes an essay by Aldona Jonaitis, known for her many books on Northwest Coast Indian art. Jonaitis offers an intelligent discussion about the relationship between this book's unique approach and existing literature on Northwest Coast native art. The effect is to point up and correct the unbalanced viewpoint often presented by nonnatives writing for like audiences. Jonaitis writes with clarity and sophistication, demonstrating her talent for bringing topics into the scope of contemporary discourse. Thus she points out that although Modernist views stifled acceptance of Native American art, Postmodern thought (and, I would add, new approaches practiced by museums and galleries) has been instrumental in illuminating its merits. This offers fertile ground for further exploration as Davidson and other artists continue to talk about their own art.

Davidson's themes in this book seem to be survival, revival, tradition, and the need for innovation in his own work. He begins by writing on the meaning of being Haida (chapter 1) and on becoming an artist (chapter 2). The two are linked inextricably for this artist. The decimation of Haida traditional culture and the paucity of art existing in Haida villages ignited Davidson's own passion to learn from art in faraway museums and ultimately to return to Massett to raise the first pole in more than fifty years, with the help of elders, family members, and friends. Davidson's identification as Haida informs his artistry; his talent is nurtured by the art of his ancestors.

The next chapters are organized in sections around particular objects, including totem poles and masks, and around major works from the 1980s. It seems fitting that totem poles such as the aforementioned pole (Bear Mother Pole) raised in Massett in 1969 became the catalyst for, in Davidson's own words, "the reawakening of our souls, our spirits" (p. 25).

Davidson's writing reflects a provocative blend of the philosopher, the artist, and the workman. He includes insights into the meanings of totem poles and masks, information about the stages of carving a totem pole, anecdotes about the agonizing decisions and changes that occur in the evolution of pieces, comments about the rewards and challenges of working with other carvers, and a

declaration about the pride of taking his place in a great art tradition. The concern for meaning, aesthetics, and theory in both traditional and contemporary native art is woefully absent in much of the existing literature and further underscores the immense contribution made by this book. When students in my art history classes ask, "What is unique about Haida art?" I refer them to this book.

Those who admired the clean, documentary style in Steltzer's earlier books will find her photographs equally, if not more, appealing in this book. The reproduction quality is considerably better here, and there is greater artistry in the more recent photos. The one hundred black-and-white photographs, dating from the early 1970s to the early 1990s, exhibit a great variety of viewpoints and locations. They depict single objects and potlatch celebrations, the solitude of the focused artist and the clamor of the studio.

Steltzer describes the difficulties of working under less than ideal situations and trying to photograph large pieces in a busy workshop, using only available light. However, these difficulties are not reflected in the photographs themselves, which have an ease and unobtrusiveness about them. Davidson and his assistants seem oblivious to Steltzer's inquisitive camera as they measure, chisel, carve, and discuss. For me, the photographs of masks and masked dancers are missing the strong color component, but Steltzer's skilled manipulation of rich tonalities creates an unexpectedly elegant depiction of the closeup surfaces of wood poles and masks. The gentle light caresses the subtle shallow relief carving and exaggerates the deeply undercut and beveled edges. These tactile and textural images point up the precision of the artist's sure hand as the tool creates a seamless flow of flat, hollow, convex, concave, straight, and turning shapes that, in the final stage, merge into an interlocking design. All the photographs are linked by Steltzer's attention to structure and composition. Some of the most provocative images are extreme closeup views of Davidson (or his brother Reg, or Larry Rosso) carving; these are artful in their concentration on the heads and hands of the carvers. Another pervasive theme in Steltzer's photos (echoed in Davidson's text) is the inherent humanity of the creative act and how it ripples outward, bringing others into its center. Davidson writes,

Since the most complete destruction of our spirit, our disconnection from our values and beliefs, it has been the art that has brought us back to our roots. (p. 15)

In this exceptional volume, the reader can experience something of Davidson's engagement with this art and with the living culture that nurtures it.

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Grass Games and Moon Races: California Indian Games and Toys. By Jeannine Gendar. Berkeley, California: Heyday Books, 1995. 125 pages. \$12.95 paper.

Reaching into natural history, the ethnographic record, colonial history, and contemporary California Indian practices, Jeannine Gendar has compiled a valuable book describing California's indigenous games and toys. *Grass Games and Moon Races* is at once a product of the current California Indian cultural renewal and a vehicle for its continuation: The book both testifies to the living vitality of traditional games in the state's Indian communities and serves as a resource for strengthening and expanding their practice. Scholars and others interested in understanding the contours of the late twentieth-century native California cultural renaissance would do well to familiarize themselves with this book.

Grass Games and Moon Races grew out of a special edition of *News from Native California* (volume 8, number 1 [1994]), an innovative quarterly magazine devoted to California Indian history and contemporary life (also published by Heyday Books). Gendar, coeditor of *News*, has done a beautiful job of integrating material from that special edition devoted to games and toys—which had many contributors—with additional research and illustrations. The book, whose ultimate purpose is “to promote fun” (p. 15), is aimed first of all at a California Indian audience interested in the reconstruction of traditional games, and, second, to a general audience interested in Native American cultures. Although it includes discussion of children's games and toys and provides many playing instructions, *Grass Games and Moon Races* is not a children's book per se; it is, however, a rich resource for any teacher or parent who wishes to promote understanding of California native traditions. Traditions surveyed include field, hoop and pole, hand, and dice games, along with running contests, archery and throwing contests, and children's toys and games, such as string figures. Gendar emphasizes tribal and