

WHO SHALL REMAIN NAMELESS?

Makers and Collectors in MOA'S Nuu-chah-nulth Basketry Collection

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis grew out of a close examination of the UBC Museum of Anthropology Nuu-chah-nulth basketry collection and the related information about it held by the Museum. While examining the Museum's documentation of this collection it became evident that the Museum had records of the names of most of the collectors of these baskets but the Museum had few records which identified the makers of the baskets. This paper examines the documents surrounding the Nuu-chah-nulth basketry collection as artifacts in their own right. It explores why certain forms of information (in this case the names of the collectors) became associated with a group of objects while other forms of information (the names of the makers) were not. It suggests that the ideological frameworks reflected in the colonial foundations of both private and museum collecting and the interpenetrating categories of "Primitive Art", "Tourist Art" and "Women's Arts"/"Crafts" have produced a system of values whereby certain objects and forms of information were deemed to be of greater importance than others. It concludes that the increasing number of makers who are being identified in recent years at this Museum signals shifts in the above mentioned categories as they are criticized and reinterpreted and it also reflects changes in the relationships between collectors, museums, and the peoples from whom their collections originate.

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## INTRODUCTION

Northwest Coast Indian artists....have been largely anonymous in our time. Moreover, when modern man (sic), a product of a society which puts great emphasis on names, fame, and individual accomplishment, looks at a collection of masks or other works of art..., he is unlikely to visualize an individual human creator behind each piece. Seldom will he be helped towards personalizing the faceless "primitive artist" by the labels he might read....The idea that each object represents the creative activity of a specific human personality who lived and worked at a particular time and place, whose artistic career had a beginning, a development, and an end, and whose work influenced and was influenced by the work of other artists is not at all likely to come to mind (Holm, 1974:60).

In his recent book, Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums, Michael Ames (1992:44) writes: "At the University of British Columbia we now train our students to be more reflexive, to inspect and write about their own work situations and to do the ethnography of their own museums." As a student of anthropology in general and museums in particular at UBC I have taken these words very much to heart in the production of an exhibition which opened recently at UBC's Museum of Anthropology (MOA).<sup>1</sup> The exhibit Who shall remain nameless? Makers and Collectors in MOA's Nuuchahnulth Basketry Collection and this subsequent paper grew directly out of a close examination of the Nuuchahnulth basketry collection and its associated documentation held by MOA. During my research I noticed that, while the Museum had records for the names of most of the people who were responsible for selling or donating the 350+ Nuuchahnulth baskets to the Museum, the records were significantly silent regarding the names of the basket makers.<sup>2</sup>

As I poured over these records it seemed that it would be fruitful to apply an approach which is currently popular in the analysis of museum exhibits (see Halpin 1978; Harraway 1985; Clifford 1991; Bal 1992) to this collection's documentation in order to "interrogate this silence" (Phillips 1992:3). Namely, I would analyze the documentation not so much to see what it revealed about the Nuu-chah-nulth themselves or their baskets, but rather to see what is revealed about the collectors of these baskets and the institution (MOA) which collected the collections. Accordingly, in this paper, I will not attempt to reconstruct the Nuu-chah-nulth cultural context from which the baskets emerge. Rather, my aim will be to look at the documentation surrounding the Nuu-chah-nulth basketry as artifacts in their own right in order "to see what can be learned about them and through them about ourselves" (Ames 1992:15). These documents are often seen as simply facts about the objects (Handler 1992)--what is known about them--but they are also the evidence of the "recontextualization of the objects" (Halpin 1983) as the objects move from the makers to the collectors and into the Museum.

Ruth Phillips has noted that "(a)lthough we have become relatively adept at reading exhibitions as texts....less attention has been paid to the anatomy of collections as historically contingent object records that permit or exclude certain representational possibilities" (Phillips 1992:2). The names of most Nuu-chah-nulth basket makers have been missing from the object

record until recently. This paper is an exploration of anonymity and identity, examining whose name becomes attached to an object when it moves into a museum. This paper will look critically at why in the past the name most likely to become associated with an object was that of its collector (for example "The Raley Collection"). I will argue that ideological frameworks reflected in the colonial foundations of both private and museum collecting and in the interpenetrating categories of "Primitive Art" (Price 1989), "Tourist Art" (Graburn 1976; Phillips 1992), "Women's Arts"/"Crafts" (Pollock and Parker 1981) have shaped these collecting practices. Belief in these categories produced a system of values whereby certain objects and forms of information were deemed to be of greater importance than others. I will also show that in recent years these objects are increasingly being identified with their makers. This increased interest in the identity of the basket makers signals a number of ideological shifts in the above mentioned categories as they are criticized and reinterpreted and it also reflects changes in the relationships between collectors, museums, and the peoples from whom their collections originate.

## THE COLLECTORS

I am deeply grateful for the very great interest you and Mrs. Hawthorne [sic] are and have been taking in bringing the Collection to rest in the Province. Needless to say We are naturally pleased it will be permantly [sic] known as "The Raley Collection" and trust it will be of use to students of the University and give pleasure to visitors you no doubt will have from all parts of the world (letter from Reverend G.H. Raley to Dr. H. Hawthorn Nov. 22/48: MOA Archives emphasis added).

There be of them, that have left a name behind them, that their praises might be reported.  
And some there be, which have no memorial; who are perished as though they had never been; and are become as though they had never been born; and their children after them (The Bible - Apocrypha 44: 8-9).

In researching the exhibition, I was often struck by how much information existed in the files about the collectors--their interests, their travels and family histories. This information often revealed how the collectors came to possess the baskets but rarely did it reveal the identities of the women who made them. As a result the collectors became more individualized, more human to me as I read their biographies, while the makers remained largely anonymous and distanced.

Private collections are about their collectors. MacCannell (1976) and Stewart (1984) among others have convincingly shown that collections are ways of representing the collectors' conceptualization of themselves to the world. While these objects remain in the hands of their collectors they are intended to be read as personal statements about their owners:

The collections may have said, 'Look how curious I am and how meticulous and how thorough. Here is my scientific collection, which reaffirms my belief in the order of the universe and the laws of nature.' The collection may have said, 'See how rich I am,' or 'Look at this. Look how I surround myself with beautiful things. See what good taste I have, how civilized and cultivated I am.' It may have said, 'Oh! I am a man of the world who has travelled much. Look at all the places I have been. Look at all the mysterious things I have brought back from my adventures. Yes! I am an adventurer' (Cameron 1971:15).

Even after these objects have made their way into museum collections it is still possible to see the personal significance they had for their owners, as well as some of the ideological foundations of this significance. Collections remain tied to the individuals who collected them through their documentation which often reflects more about this personal significance than it elucidates the meaning of the objects in their culture of origin.

There is a growing literature (see Cole 1985; Gordon and Herzog 1988; Lee 1991; Feest 1992) on Native material culture collecting and the ideologies which are reflected in the subsequent collections. These collecting practices can be related, as Molly Lee has noted: "to contemporaneous perceptions of Native peoples and to key values in Western culture that are their source" (Lee 1991:6). In her article, Lee shows that the collecting of Native curios at the turn-of-the Century in Alaska reflected a perception of Natives as being "Others" and that an authentic object collected from them could have both status-related and instructive associations. These associations reflected a value system which maintained the Victorians' feelings of cultural superiority and

relegated Native crafted objects to act as illustrations of their collectors' economic or social status, or as part of a classification of natural and cultural objects, or to function as symbols of a nostalgic yearning on the part of the Western collectors for a more pristine past (ibid.:13). In this section I will draw on examples from the documentation of MOA's Nuu-chah-nulth basketry collection in order to show that the anonymity of the makers largely resulted from the collecting practices of people who were little concerned with the identities of the basket makers. I will show that these collecting practices reveal perceptions about Native culture and reflect Western value systems.

The extensive collection (c. 1893-1934) purchased by MOA (with a \$5000 donation from H.R. Macmillan) in 1948 from Reverend George H. Raley, D.D., F.R.G.S., F.R.S.A. offers an opportunity to reflect upon an example of the collecting practices of a private collector. These are documented in MOA's archives, where his private "Catalogue of Indian Relics," an article entitled "Canadian Indian Art and Industries: an economic problem of to-day" (1935) written for the Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, and personal correspondence between Rev. Raley and the Museum provide insight into his collecting methods and the assumptions about Native peoples and their arts which shaped his collection.

Rev. Raley moved to B.C. in 1893 where he was stationed as a Methodist missionary in the Native village of Kitimaat. In 1906 he was appointed to the Port Simpson Indian Mission. In 1914 he took up the position of principal to the Coqualeetza Indian Residential School in Mission until his retirement in 1934. His extensive collection of Native materials were collected over the course of his missionary works and were at one point housed at the Coqualeetza School. Later part of his collection was displayed at the Vancouver City Hall Archives before being sold to UBC's Museum of Anthropology in 1948.

Rev. Raley's collecting practices, from what can be ascertained from his "Catalogue of Indian Relics," are rather obscure. It is not clear in most cases whether he bought objects from Natives, was given them as gifts, acquired items through purchase or gift from non-Natives such as Indian agents, purchased some pieces in curio shops or through dealers, or simply "found" the pieces in his travels (Goodfellow 1992:6). Where Raley does provide some details of acquisition they are invariably for objects which were made by and acquired through men: "Chief Jesse's paddle, when he drowned" (Raley n.d.:10); "Feast spoon obtained through Chief Poutlas at the head of the Inlet" (ibid.:15); "(t)riple face taken from cave where Chiefs had been buried. Procured through Chief Paul, 1897" (ibid.:28). Not one of the more than 150 basketry items from the Northwest Coast area in Raley's collection

indicate who the makers were or through whom he had purchased them (in many cases these would have likely been the same person).<sup>3</sup> Certainly information for one class of objects was more interesting and/or important to Raley than another. It is worth noting that those objects for which Raley records greater amounts of information (including from whom he had procured the objects) are those which commemorate a specific event (i.e. a drowning of a high ranking individual) or ceremonial goods. These objects fall into categories of historical artifacts and ethnographic artifacts. And while basketry items are also ethnographic in nature, they reflect a more mundane level than the predominantly ceremonial and spiritual objects for which he provides more in depth collection information. Another clue to what divides these two classes of objects is that he separates objects into two categories: "arts" and "crafts" in his later writing.

Indian arts and crafts are peculiarly distinctive and part of the Indians themselves; they are unlike anything else in the world. Canadians regret that no organized effort has been made to save from oblivion that which is distinctively Canadian. Indian art itself, which has a charm "elfin-like and weird" and was Canada's first contribution to the world of art, must not be lost (Raley 1935:993).

And while Raley gives no definition of what he means by arts and crafts it seems quite evident from his catalogue that he makes some distinction between objects which function at a merely mundane level and those which serve a higher purpose.

We find that our system of advancement brought him (the native) into competition with the white man; and at the present time for many reasons this is undesirable, for only very few can successfully compete with the white man on equal terms. For the majority it is reasonable that their thought should be directed to living by their own particular and peculiar crafts, in which there would be no competition (ibid:995).

Raley's article reflects many of the colonial assumptions of his day. Indeed, he, like many other missionaries at that time (i.e. William Duncan and Thomas Crosby), saw aboriginal societies as primitive forms of civilization which would inevitably be replaced by a superior Western civilization (Bolt 1992:2). It was also a common assumption at that time, both within academic circles as well as in the general public, that lack of individualism was in fact an integral part of "primitive" societies:

Much scholarly writing on these societies posits individuality at the level of the social whole rather than the human individual. There is even an elaborate theory of social evolution which asserts that in "primitive" societies--in contrast to the modern West--persons are imprisoned by hide-bound traditions which block the emergence of creative individuality. Much, though by no means all, ethnographic writing omits reference to individuals and posits instead generic social actors (Handler 1992:24).

This can be seen in Raley's article where he uses a form of the "ethnographic present" (Fabian 1983) and utilizes a singular social actor and employs "him" to represent all Native people. These are a people without personal agency or identity. From this position it is not surprising that the names of the makers of the objects in Rev. Raley's collection remain unidentified--the only important

social actors must emerge from Western society:

After a long period of residence amongst the Indians of Canada, it will not be presumptuous of me if, prompted by a lifelong and sympathetic interest in their welfare, I discuss a problem which is associated with their present and future happiness and prosperity (Raley 1935:989).

The very fact that they are not free agents but living on Reserves carries with it the responsibility to provide them with a livelihood. We have a double responsibility to these, Nature's children, whom we have dispossessed of their aboriginal heritage (ibid.:991 emphasis added).

A lack of concern with the names of the basket makers is also true for most of the other private collectors in MOA's collection. These baskets were collected and kept as signs of an encounter with the Other and not a specific individual (Lee 1991). Even in cases where it is fairly certain that the collectors purchased or received their baskets directly from a basket maker no record of the women's names remain.

This is the case with Mrs. Grace Frost, a field nurse who worked with the Department of Indian affairs between 1920-1945. During that time she was located in Masset, Queen Charlotte Islands, but in the course of her duties she also travelled to and worked in a number of other communities. It may have been on one of these trips that she acquired the three Nuuchahnulth baskets which were later donated to the Museum. While Grace Frost did remain for a long time in Haida territory, travelled to other

Native communities and was in frequent contact with the makers of the material she collected, she did not record the names of the weavers of the baskets. The baskets have become the physical remains and reminders not of the women who produced them but of the experiences Mrs. Frost had while serving as a field nurse in their communities:

Mrs. Frost has seen the women making these baskets. From the time of gathering the roots to the finished product, which in many instances was given her in gratitude for her long and loving care in nursing them (letter from Mrs. Martin, wife of Masset's post master 1964: MOA Archives).

Again, the importance of the baskets in the construction of Mrs. Frost's image as a dedicated health care provider within the Native communities in which she served is foregrounded, while other forms of information, such as the specific identities of her grateful patients are lost from the record.

Indian products were not in any event perceived as art, but as ethnographic evidence of a "primitive" people, as travel mementos, or as utilitarian or decorative craft objects that could add to the quality of the environment. They were seen and valued as anonymous products made by "Indians" (or sometimes by "Navajo," "Washoe," or other tribes), rather than as creative works by individual artists. Most collectors had positive, even romantic feelings about the people who made the items, but they still did not see them as real, distinct, or individual people (Gordon and Herzog 1988:8).

Thus, "ethnographic evidence of a 'primitive' people" is presented by Judge Henry Castillou, "cowboy, packer, aviator,

lawyer and judge" (Vancouver Sun April 22, 1967: MOA Archives), whose collection (c. 1910-1965) reflects his interest in anthropology. A note which was found inside one of the Nuu-chah-nulth baskets records his observations about the basket as well as an unattributed story about the design:

Basket of grass from bottom of ocean weaved in water. Art of the Ahts of West Coast of Vancouver Island supposed to be the oldest Coastal people. Whale swallows two men in a canoe. Sagalee Tyee (thunderbird) comes down. Drives talons in whale forces whale to disgorge canoe and two men. Notice joyful expression of two men rescued. One of the best examples of Manhousaht art-West Coast-expressing joy by simple lines. All go to feast on whale including Sagalee Tyee. Only four Manhousaht left. The Swan family all killed off by Ahousaht of Sidney Inlet, B.C. (Castillou n.d. MOA Archives).

Castillou's use of Native phrases, his recounting of the story behind the design, and his apparent knowledge of West Coast historical events serve to establish his identity as an amateur ethnographer. But the basket itself is seen as the product of Nuu-chah-nulth culture (and more specifically of the Manhousaht band) rather than the work of any particular basket maker, and any reference to the object's true location in the realm of commodities is minimized by the invocation of the mythic nature of the designs.

Baskets which represent "mementos," often, though not always of a person's travels, far outnumber any other category expressed in the documentation of the private collections received by MOA. Such objects, Stewart (1984:135) points out, "serve as traces of authentic experience." For example, several Nuu-chah-nulth baskets

were donated by Mrs. Mary G. Fyfe Smith to the Museum in 1951. No information exists in the record of the names of the makers of any of the large number of Northwest Coast baskets in the Fyfe Smith collection. These baskets are just part of a larger collection of baskets which include Maori, Fijian, and Samoan examples and this collection is in turn merely a small part of a collection of numerous objects of all kinds from Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, the Phillipines as well as other Pacific Islands. The objects in this collection provide concrete evidence of the extensive travels of the Fyfe Smith family during the years between 1900 and 1951 when much of their collection was donated to MOA. Their activities as tourists are literally mapped out by the various locations in which their objects were acquired.

Those collectors who acquired their objects as "utilitarian or decorative craft objects" are the least well documented within the collection of Nuu-chah-nulth basketry at MOA. In one instance a Nuu-chah-nulth basket whose collector is listed as the Justice Lord family record that it was used as a "jewellery box." No other information besides this function is recorded for the piece.

The documentation at MOA indicates that, until very recently, private collectors recorded and passed on the names of the basket makers to this Museum only under one set of circumstances: when the collectors commissioned specific women to make a specialty items

not readily available on the market. This is the case with Stan Bailey who was a sociology student at UBC in 1938. During that year he commissioned Anna August of Ahousaht to prepare grass samples, examples of the various stages of weaving, and a finished basketry mat as illustrations for a course paper entitled "Indian Basketry: with particular reference to and illustration of Ahousaht Indian Basketry (West Coast of Vancouver Island)" (1938: MOA Archives). These items were incorporated into the collections of the Museum sometime after its opening in 1947. In 1942 a collector by the name of Letitia Hay commissioned Nellie Jacobson, also of Ahousaht, to make her eight basketry buttons. In 1978 Letitia Hay donated these buttons to the museum along with a letter from Nellie Jacobson discussing a similar commission for another woman and a newspaper clipping from the Vancouver Sun (Cash 1954:5 MOA Archives) entitled "The Maker of Baskets," which featured Nellie Jacobson "one of our most famous basket makers" (ibid.:5). It is because of the specific nature of these commissions, reflecting a particular kind of relationship--one of patron/maker--which has resulted in the names of these women becoming closely associated with their work. These makers were sought out by their clients rather than accidentally encountered and these relationships are further documented in the letter and the term paper which were written. It is, however, worth noting that the name of the woman who was responsible for supplying Stan Bailey with the basketry and grass samples for his paper was initially missing from all the documentation relating to this collection. It was during the

course of my research that I ran across a copy of Stan Bailey's original paper in an unrelated file in which he clearly identified Anna August of Ahousaht as the basket maker. Somehow, over the years her name had become separated from the objects which she made, although the information regarding Stan Bailey and the paper he wrote remained tied to the collection.

## THE MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY

- \*1. Field catalog number
- \*2. Ethnic group of users
- 3. Name of artifact
  - 3.1 In local language; with translation if possible
  - 3.2 In English (or other major world language).
- \*4. Use
  - Some general notes, plus sufficient information to allow proper display (e.g., the precise manner in which a piece of clothing is worn).
- 5. History
  - \*5.1 Where, from whom, and date obtained
  - 5.2 Where made (especially if made by another ethnic group and imported by the group using it); maker's name and social group if known
  - \*5.3 Age (new; if not new, an estimate of age should be obtained to provide data on durability and on style changes)
- 6. Condition
  - 6.1 Wear, damage, missing pieces
  - 6.2 Directions for assembly, if dismantled
- 7. Component materials (at least the vernacular names)
- 8. Typicality
  - 8.1 Commonness of the type, frequency in the community
  - 8.2 Owners' or users' evaluation of its quality as compared to others of the same kind
  - 8.3 Estimate of local value (monetary and other); price paid if purchased
- 9. Other associated specimens in the collection (parts of complexes of use or manufacture; contrasting pieces)

\* minimum essential documentation (Sturtevant 1977:29 emphasis added--note that the maker's name is not included in the minimum documentation).

Sturtevant notes regarding field collected objects: "the value of a collection depends almost entirely on the quality of the accompanying data" (1977:28). The quality of the data can vary widely depending upon the type of collecting which is done. At this point I would like to emphasize a fundamental distinction between the donated/purchased collections from collectors which I have focused on in the preceding section, and museum sponsored

field collections (such as Sturtevant is discussing) or museum commissions of material. Museum staff would love to acquire their collections through their own commissions or field collecting where the fullest possible information could be obtained. But the reality is that museums necessarily depend in large measure upon the collecting efforts of others who then donate or sell their materials to museums and, as I have shown above, these individuals often did not bother to record maker or user information.

So far I have focused on how the nature of private collecting shaped the information which was passed on to the Museum and how the collectors' concerns with personal identity eclipsed the identity of the makers of the baskets. It would be easy to end my analysis here with the collectors bearing all the responsibility for the anonymity of the makers of the Nuu-chah-nulth basketry in MOA's collection. During my research however, I found evidence that suggests that upon occasion the staff of the Museum were less interested in the identities of basket makers than they were in other aspects of the baskets. As with collectors, those aspects which are foregrounded at the Museum reflect the museum staff's conceptualization of the Museum's role and their relationships to existing currents in both popular and intellectual thought.

Museums are not mainly responsible for (the) condition of ethnographic data, and when they label an artifact with the name of a group rather than that of a person, they may believe that they have no other choice. There are, after all, no names for anonymous artists. Nonetheless, museums' use of these collective identifications, in contrast to the

personalized attributes given to Western artworks (Monet's Water Lilies, but a Kwakiutl mask) reproduces an ideology about the inferior individualization of non-Western peoples (Handler 1991:24).

Recent criticisms have shown how exhibitions reflect the political and cultural assumptions present in popular culture (eg. Harraway 1985; Stocking, ed. 1985; Karp and Lavine, eds. 1991; Feest 1992). This is not only reflected in the exhibits mounted by an institution but can also be seen in decisions regarding field collecting (or not field collecting) certain objects, in acquiring (or not acquiring) objects offered to a museum and in the types of information which are (and are not) elicited by the staff in the documentation process. The categories into which Nuu-chah-nulth baskets have been placed ("Tourist Art," "Primitive Art," and "Women's Art"/"Crafts") also reflect assumptions regarding the value of these materials as objects for collection, research and for exhibition within museums.

Each act of selecting items, selecting peoples from whom to collect, electing to elicit information on the detailed history of each item, their producers, users, and owners, choosing items for public display in exhibitions, and organizing those displays was an act of creation (Dominguez 1986:550).

Again, as before, examination of the documentation of these baskets reveals the unconscious workings of an ideology which functioned to value one object over another, and particular aspects of an object over other aspects of the same object.

I wonder if you would be willing to make notes as the material is packed. This would be a tremendous help to me, in a summer that is impssibly [sic] overworked and understaffed.....

Write, for each piece whatever of the following data you have:  
# name of item. from whom purchased date. tribe & name of owner if you know it. date it was in use or made. location. any remarks you care to make. I know that this is a great deal of work, and as I say, if you cannot do it, we'll have to leave it for now. But this is all data that we must eventually obtain for the greatest use of the records. Do not do this in any case for routine objects, like baskets or unimportant objects....

We are looking forward very much to its arrival, as it is wonderful material. Generations of students will be using it in time to come; this of course, is also why it is so important to have the records as full as possible, looking towards the day when the only traces of the old tribal ways are to be learned from Museums! (Audrey Hawthorn to Edith Bevan Cross 1962: MOA Archives emphasis added).

In this quotation from a letter written by MOA's founding curator, Audrey Hawthorn, to Mrs. Edith Bevan Cross in 1962, basketry material is pointedly excluded from those objects for which the curator is actively seeking detailed information. It is clear from the letter that there are materials for which she is more interested in receiving information (those items that would not be deemed routine or unimportant) and these can be identified as those objects which represent the "old tribal ways."

There are two interpenetrating points of interest in this statement. The first is the apparent association between things which are old and things which are worthy of attention. The second is the assumption that the "old tribal ways" will someday soon only be found in the Museum.

Ethnological collecting rested on the belief that "it is necessary to use the time to collect before it is too late" ....Too late for what? There is a historical consciousness here of a special sort. We hear an urgency in the voices of the collectors, a fear that we will no longer be able to get our hands on these objects, and that this would amount to an irretrievable loss of the means of preserving our own historicity (Dominguez 1986:548).

These perceptions were not new at the time when Hawthorn wrote this letter, as Gordon and Herzog (1988:8) point out:

Turn-of-the-century collectors rushing to find Indian goods before they disappeared rarely acknowledged the discrepancy between their assumption and the burgeoning number of Indian goods being handled by traders and curio dealers. When they did, they tended to value only the older, "authentic" forms. There was little exploration of the idea that there were new, experimental and often innovative forms in nearly all media, or that Indian art traditions were continuing to evolve. The general assumption, of course, was that there would soon be no more Indians.

The assumption of cultural loss and the importance of museum salvage continued well into the late 1960's, when what has been termed the Northwest Coast art renaissance or revival (but what in actuality was the continued evolution of Native art traditions as mentioned above) made it clear that Native traditions and arts were not going to disappear. And while the Museum of Anthropology has been more progressive than most institutions in the recognition of contemporary Native artists, it is interesting to note that it was the male arts of carving and the old, traditional forms such as totem poles, not recognizable women's arts or tourist arts which first received official recognition through patronage:

Probably the single most important event was in 1949 when Audrey and Harry Hawthorn of the UBC Museum of Anthropology commissioned Kwakiutl carvers Ellen Neel and Mungo Martin to restore some of the poles at the university. This commission established Martin as a full time carver and informant in residence, first for two years at UBC and subsequently for ten years at the RBCM with Wilson Duff (Ames 1992:63-64).<sup>4</sup>

Baskets can, in this context, be interpreted as being less important to collect information about since most were not rare, old pieces in need of salvage but rather part of a modern tourist trade where mass production had made them a "routine" object. Phillips has noted that the focus on the old, the "authentic" and the unacculturated which resulted in the "exclusion of these objects from formal programs of collecting and exhibiting was central to the standard museum representation of Native American as other, as marginalized and as premodern" (1992:4); a standard representation which MOA has not been entirely successful at avoiding.

It could be argued that one of the reasons that MOA does not have many baskets made by named makers prior to 1987 is due to the fact that the museum had never been offered a collection whose collector knew the names of the makers. This, however, is not the case. In 1984 Trevor Goodall of Port Alberni offered a "collection of weaving saved and collected many years ago, all is master work and in 100% condition. Also who made the baskets etc. and dates when I got them" (letter from Trevor Goodall to Michael Ames 1984: MOA Archives, emphasis added). From the correspondence in the file

it is clear that Mr. Goodall desired that most of his collection be placed in the Museum of Anthropology (as the larger Museum with the greater prestige) and that some of the pieces also should be placed in the Alberni Valley Museum in Port Alberni. At MOA however, it was felt that much of his collection duplicated in form and style many of the baskets already found in UBC's collection. MOA subsequently transferred all but one of the baskets to the Alberni Valley Museum where they would be closer to the women who wove the baskets to act as sources of inspiration (Elizabeth Johnson, 1993 personal communication). Included in the baskets which were transferred to Port Alberni were baskets made by Mildred Benson of Ahousaht, Mrs. Keitlah of Ahousaht, and a set of seven "nesting baskets" made by "Old Mary" of Sarita and sold in the Princess Maquinna Gift Shop, as well as a basketry covered bottle which Mr. Goodall attributes to Mrs. Jumbo. At this time only two named makers were identified in MOA's Nuu-chah-nulth basketry collection. Mr. Goodall's collection would have effectively tripled the number of identified Nuu-chah-nulth baskets makers in the collection.

Of particular note here is that the basket which MOA decided to keep for its collection was a pattern basket (c. 1900); a basket which was considered, by virtue of its age and its style, to fill a gap in the Museum's collection (Elizabeth Johnson, 1993 personal communication). Another example of "filling the gaps" can be seen in a letter from Audrey Hawthorn to Mrs. Jessie Webster, a basket maker from Ahousaht:

One of your grandchildren was a visitor to our Museum yesterday to look at our Nootka materials. She said that you still made the nobility hat by weaving....If so, what do you charge? I would like to have one for our Museum as we have none. Please let me know, so I may order one (letter from Audrey Hawthorn to Jessie Webster 1971: MOA Archives).

The nobility hat (also called the Whaler's or Maquinna hat) to which Hawthorn is referring is a contemporary interpretation of the twined cedar basketry hats worn by high ranking Nuu-chah-nulth people at the time of European contact. The modern interpretations, such as those made by Jessie Webster, utilize different materials (grass instead of cedar) and different techniques (wrapped twining instead of twining) but they closely match the form and designs of the old versions. This nobility hat and two later ones also commissioned by Audrey Hawthorn are the only Nuu-chah-nulth basketry material which has ever been commissioned directly by the staff at this Museum (no information regarding the materials, the process of manufacture, or the symbolism of the designs was requested by Audrey Hawthorn).

The phrase "filling gaps,"....point(s) clearly to the idealized taxonomic chart of culture that lay behind the ethnologist-collectors' project, with available slots waiting for insertion of imagined objects--objects which, if they did not exist 'in the field' would have to be (re)invented (Phillips 1992:15).

The notion of "filling the gaps" in a collection reflects certain ideological assumptions which have tended to focus museum collecting practices on the gathering of older "ethnically pure" materials. Phillips (1992:13) has noted that "the project of

ethnological collecting rested on the assumption that ethnicity and material culture were isomorphically related, a belief in the perfect coincidence of art and cultural style..." Those items which are obviously the results of culture contact are not, in the same sense, "authentic;" being in essence intercultural rather than purely cultural (ibid:25). Thus, the "old", "rare" pattern basket--made for the use of the basket maker (as a pattern sampler) rather than the market--and the re-creation of the Maquinna hat--a modern interpretation of a traditional form--are privileged over more obviously acculturated objects.

To make it more complicated, consider women's work. They are usually assigned to the lower status categories of "craft" and "decorative arts" (Ames 1992:155).

In the section on collectors it was possible to show evidence drawn from the documentation which indicates that information about the baskets and the women who make them may not be as complete as that gathered about objects made by men, a distinction which can be captured in the separation of art from craft (Parker and Pollack 1981:51). I will now turn to the question of whether a parallel ideology of men's "art" versus women's "craft" has functioned in the Museum of Anthropology to create a set of values whereby the works of men has been deemed more interesting or important than those of women. It is impossible to fully separate the various influences that the overlapping categories of "Primitive Art,"

"Tourist Art," "Women's Art,"/"Craft" have had on the valuing or de-valuing of the Nuu-chah-nulth baskets (and by extension their makers) within the Museum of Anthropology; but, it is possible to make a few observations regarding the apparent place of women and their "Crafts" within the Museum and its possible effect on the anonymity of these particular basket makers.

In examining the Museum's collecting practices a few observations can be made. There is no evidence to be found in the collections themselves which would suggest that objects are turned away if their makers were women. In fact in examining MOA's collection of Nuu-chah-nulth material it can be seen that baskets outnumber all other Nuu-chah-nulth objects by more than two to one. True, as I noted above, less information tends to be available about the baskets in the collection, but responsibility for this lies with the collectors who failed to gather pertinent data (or does it?--see preceding discussion of the Bevan Cross collection, the Jessie Webster commission, and the separation of Anna August's name from the other information about her baskets).

It is in MOA's permanent exhibits where we can see the greatest distinction between "art" and "craft," between the male and the female, and between the celebrated and the merely displayed. The Great Hall, the Koerner Masterpiece Gallery, and the Rotunda are the three permanent galleries where objects from Northwest Coast Native peoples are exhibited as fine art objects,

and within these galleries you will find objects whose makers are men. Within the Great Hall, where the maker is known, his name is recorded on the plaques which provide minimal information about these monumental pieces. Within the Masterpiece Gallery, the male makers are also identified for some but by no means the majority of the pieces. Within the Rotunda there is only one object, commonly considered the centrepiece of MOA, the contemporary sculpture The Raven and the First Men which was carved by Bill Reid. These three galleries comprise the total permanent exhibit space dedicated to celebrating the accomplishments of Northwest Coast First Nations artists.

Objects which have been made by women are found on permanent display in the Museum's "visible storage" system (also known as the "Research Collections")<sub>5</sub>. These are not exhibits per se, but rather a large portion of the Museum's storage area arranged geographically and made accessible to the general public. Here you will find the basketry items, the beaded objects, and many of the other objects made by women--clothing and textiles are not displayed at all due to their light sensitive nature. The makers names, when known, are not placed with the objects but can be found in the catalogue records located in large data books scattered throughout the gallery. Although there have been a number of temporary exhibits set up in other galleries which feature women's arts over the years, I want to focus on the day-to-day messages which are being communicated by the Museum. Surely there is system

of values reflected by the arrangement of the permanent galleries which privileges men's "arts" over women's "crafts." This dynamic is in fact repeated and reinforced in the Museum Gift Shop--where the only handcrafted objects which are regularly sold as anonymous works are those made by women.

## THE BASKET MAKERS

They are just starting to take names down at the museums--keeping track of who did what...I don't think that in my grandmother's time they took any names...her work might be in Victoria (at the RBCM) but they don't have the names (Nellie Dennis, 1991 personal communication).

Within the past five years at the Museum of Anthropology the number of named Nuu-chah-nulth basket makers on record has more than tripled. This dramatic increase attracted my attention during my initial research as much as the near silence regarding the makers which characterized the first 40 years of collecting this material at MOA, and which has been the main subject of this paper. It was obvious that changes have occurred which make this information more available and/or desirable. But just what are these changes? In this concluding section I will argue that the increased interest in the identity of the basket makers signals a number of ideological shifts in the categories of "Primitive Art," "Tourist Art," "Women's Art"/"Crafts." I will also discuss how changing relationships between collectors, the Museum, and the peoples from whom their collections originate has resulted in greater attention being paid to the individual accomplishments of Native artists.

Two of the Museums of Anthropology's more recent acquisitions of Nuu-chah-nulth basketry material have included the names of the makers. In 1989 Mr. Mason Davis, an art dealer in Victoria, sold a collection of Nuu-chah-nulth basketry objects which he had

purchased from the son of the well-known basket maker Dora Frank. Nelson Graburn (1976) has noted that it serves a dealer's interest to play up the name of individual makers as part of the contemporary advancement of these pieces as objects of art.

...(M)iddlemen and dealers have tried to promote the names of individual artists to the buying public. For the art-collecting public, the underlying analogy is that since creative works of value are made by named individuals in our culture, the best of someone else's culture must also be made by unique, named individuals (Graburn 1976:22).

It is interesting to note that in this case the name of the basket maker was the only information provided by Mr. Davis. Likewise, when Vera Maceluch sold her three Nuu-chah-nulth baskets to the Museum in 1992 the only information she was able to provide were the makers' names, Elsie Dennis and Mary Moses. As a private collector Vera Maceluch valued her baskets as aesthetic objects made by named artists (Vera Maceluch, 1992 personal communication), rather than as ethnographic specimens or as souvenirs.

Examples such as these show that the borders between "Primitive Art," "Tourist Art," "Women's Art"/"Crafts" and the privileged realm of "Fine Art" are becoming blurred, not only within the official institutions, but in the minds of the general public as well.

(The) craft explosion was reinforced by a renewed scholarly and popular attention to folk art, seen at this point less as Americana or a manifestation of the rural or working class than as yet another legitimate but undervalued form of artistic expression. This perception was in turn reinforced

or informed by the feminist interest in reclaiming the art of unsung generations of "anonymous" women...and by their redefinition of what should be understood as "legitimate" art (Gordon and Herzog 1988:11).

We may someday drop by again. If you would like to know what I make, I make oval baskets which sell really good, any size, as long as it's not too big, and I weave over bottles, small or big. I weave over glass balls or abalone shell and over vases and I do earrings, in different shapes, I'm sending 2 of them there which you may see...(letter from Annie Clappis to Allison Cronin 1990: MOA Archives).

Recently Nuu-chah-nulth basket makers have been approaching the museum directly in order to sell their baskets, as the makers exploit the Museum's function as a purveyor of values. What is emerging is a relationship different from that between the Museum and private collectors. The Museum staff is also more actively involved in interviewing the makers about their work when they bring in their baskets. From this shifting relationship, different kinds of information are being provided by the makers than those traditionally provided by collectors. Information regarding the process of weaving, the collection of materials, personal influences and innovations emerge as the important aspects for the makers.

Basket making is very slow work. Its slow work because you have to keep three strands going at the same time. The glass floats are especially hard to cover because they keep slipping...All the weaving materials have to be wet. However, if they are too wet then the colours end up really ugly (Interview of Christina Cox by Dr. Elizabeth Johnson 1988: MOA Archives).

This information represents to the Museum those aspects of the baskets which these women deem as most important.

## CONCLUSION

While the object systems of art and anthropology are institutionalized and powerful, they are not immutable. The categories of the beautiful, the cultural, and the authentic have changed and are changing. Thus it is important to resist the tendency of collections to be self-sufficient, to suppress their own historical, economic, and political processes of production (Clifford 1988:229).

Within this paper I have used examples taken from the documentation of MOA's Nuu-chah-nulth basketry collection in order to show how the categories of "Primitive Art," "Tourist Art," and "Women's Art"/"Craft" have provided both private and museum collectors with the ideological frameworks which have shaped their collecting practices. Inclusion or exclusion from these categories largely determined how objects and information about them were valued by their various collectors. Recent criticisms of these categories and, more importantly, analyses of in whose interests they have functioned to include and exclude certain objects and sets of values, have been instrumental in exposing their ideological foundations. The recategorization of these objects as "Fine Art" and the subsequent concern with named makers has had political as well as theoretical implications:

Deciding what is 'art' is not only a matter of academic tradition, semantics, or personal preference, it is also a political act. The label determines what is to be admitted into that inner sanctum of the cultural establishment, the prestigious gallery of art. To deny serious consideration of the art of indigenous peoples, that is, to exclude it from mainstream institutions....is 'to collaborate in the suppression of their identity and in their continuing exclusion from the full life of this country' (Ames 1992:154).

The redefinition of these pieces as "Fine Art" also has had implications for the recognition of individual Native artists:

Hand in hand with the new perception of Indian works as art has come the recognition that these are not anonymous products made by faceless people, but recognizable individual works, created by nameable artists. This new apprehension has had an enormous impact on the contemporary Indian art scene and on contemporary Indian artists (Gordon and Herzog 1988:12).

Therefore naming itself becomes a political act, determining who is recognised and valued by society.

The redefinitions which are discussed above are part of a larger picture of changing relationships between museums and First Nations. Museums have responded to criticisms from within the Native community by re-examining many of the ways in which First Nations peoples have been represented by museums. The joint Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples (1992) sponsored by the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association points out some of the ways in which First Nations peoples would like museums to respond to their desire for better representation in museums:

The major focus of discussions has been on the interpretation of First Peoples culture and history in public exhibitions. It was agreed that the role of First Peoples in Canadian history should be stressed. This approach should replace the stereotyped exhibitions that depict First Peoples as dying, primitive and inferior cultures, or as cultures isolated from Canada's history, in "pre-history" galleries. The linkage between Aboriginal heritage and the present circumstances of First Peoples should also be represented; in fact, museums should become forums for discussions of relevant contemporary issues (Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association 1992:4).

As part of the struggle to redefine the relationship between First Nations peoples and museums, greater attention is being paid to the individuals whose objects end up in museum collections. As a result staff at the Museum are more actively gathering information about the makers of the Nuu-chah-nulth basketry and through this information these women emerge as living, changing human beings in a way that is impossible when their objects come to the Museum through a third party (the collector).

I'm really glad that I learned and that it is still in the family. It won't become a lost art (Rita Dennis, 1993 personal communication).

It gives you pride that you can do those things. Like sometimes I can get into the designs and it's right there - all the things my mother used to say. I put a canoe there and a whale and I remember her telling me what they used to do (Julie Johnson, 1991 personal communication).

(Harold Touchie and his wife) want to preserve the piece so that their daughters know where it is and can see it (Interview of Harold Touchie by Carol Mayer 1992: MOA Archives).

Themes of survival, resistance against a dominant culture and cultural continuity are the stories that emerge from the information provided by the makers. Museums will continue to reflect the self-conceptualizations of the private collectors as well as those of museum curators; but by knowing the people who made the objects and talking to them it is also possible to see how the makers conceive of themselves in relation to these objects. And rather than being the remnants of a past colonial discourse,

these objects and the stories they can tell point to an emerging post-colonial relationship between the Museum and the peoples from whom their objects originate.

## ENDNOTES

- 1     The exhibit, Who shall remain nameless? Makers and Collectors in MOA's Nuu-chah-nulth Basketry Collection was on display at the UBC Museum of Anthropology between April 13 and September 26, 1993. The exhibit and this paper were completed in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts program.
  
- 2     The documentation of the Nuu-chah-nulth basketry collection showed that the Museum had the records of the names of the sources for all but 10 of the baskets while only thirteen of the makers of these baskets were identified by name. Only three basket makers were identified in the collection prior to 1987. Altogether, the thirteen identified basket makers account for fewer than 30 of the over 350 Nuu-chah-nulth basketry objects in MOA's collection.
  
- 3     While it is possible that Rev. Raley acquired some of the basketry material through men as well (men sold baskets made by their wives or other female relatives) this is not evident in the documentation. Only those objects which were made by men and acquired through them occasionally have the names of the men from whom these objects were collected.
  
- 4     While it is true that Ellen Neel is a woman, it is also true that she works in what has generally been recognised (on the Northwest Coast) as the male idiom of carving and painting. The average visitor to the Museum remains unaware that women could have had anything to do with the totem poles which stand in the Great Hall. And also worth mentioning is that it was Mungo Martin who went on as the resident carver/informant at MOA as well as at the RBCM and not Ellen Neel.
  
- 5     A structural problem exists in the design of the Museum of Anthropology which limits the options for the exhibition of women's work in the permanent exhibit galleries. The Great Hall, the Masterpiece gallery and the Rotunda are all exposed to natural sunlight. Due to the light sensitive nature of most of the objects made by women--baskets, textiles and clothing--inclusion of these pieces in these galleries presents difficult conservation problems.
  
- 6     The focus in this paper on the individual maker is ideologically and politically motivated. Graburn identifies some of the ideological bases for a concern with the individual:

(W)ith the emergence of industrialization with its

accent on standardization, competitiveness, and progress, the artist became further glorified. This cult of individualism, as opposed to cooperative equalitarian effort, fits a belief system that differentiates art from life and leaders from ordinary people (1976:23).

At this time it is the discourse which focuses on the individual artist which is both the dominant as well as privileged one. As the earlier quote by Ames (1992:154) points out "to deny serious consideration of the art of indigenous peoples, that is to exclude it from mainstream institutions....is 'to collaborate in the suppression of their identity and in their continuing exclusion from the full life of this country.'" It has been my aim throughout this paper to question the exclusion of the names of basket makers from the information found in a mainstream institution--the museum. This of course is not the only approach. Janet Wolff has argued against the privileging of the individual artist in her book The Social Production of Art (1981) (although here she is largely concerned with Western Art and Western Art History):

(T)his book will systematically consider the social production of art, and.... will move progressively away from the idea of artist-as-creator. I hope to show that the named artist played much less of a part in the production of the work than our commonsense view of the artist as genius, working with divine inspiration, leads us to believe. I will argue that many other people are involved in producing the work, that social and ideological factors determine or affect the writer/painter's work, and that the audiences and readers play an active and participatory role in creating the finished product (1981:25).

This approach argues for looking at how society contributes to the production of the art which is subsequently attributed to individuals. This approach is quite new in the analysis of Western art which has tended to focus too much on individuals. The study of tribal arts has suffered from the reverse problem. The art of non-Western societies has been seen as emerging strictly from communal, social forces rather than from an individual (Handler 1992:24). It is not my aim in this paper to deny the role of society in the production of art in general but rather to examine why certain classes of objects have been excluded from the dominant discourse.

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