

SIMA

2010 Symposium

Session One
Thursday, July 22nd, 9:30-12:00

BETHANY EDMUNDS

INTENTION OF EXCHANGE IN THE PACIFIC

Polynesian adornment represents the symbiotic relationship between social structure and environmental sustainability. This project uses a select set of objects to derive the intention of exchange between the indigenous peoples of Hawaii and New Zealand and Captain Charles Wilkes' Exploring Expedition of 1838-42. Calculations will be made to establish cultural value by focusing on the symbolic meaning of the objects within the source communities, and identifying their inherent materiality to quantify resource requirements, the availability and production of materials. Textual information will be reinterpreted to decipher the differing perspectives between western and indigenous value systems at the point of exchange.

CATHERINE NICHOLS

THE DISTRIBUTION OF DUPLICATES FROM THE US NATIONAL MUSEUM

The formation of anthropological collections and their deposition into the US National Museum was a symbolic process of national imagination through regional incorporation. Though given to the National Museum, a notable percentage of the objects, considered by both the collectors and curators to be "duplicates" were either exchanged with natural history museums or given as gifts to small museums and libraries. In this study, I investigate how BAE collectors thought about duplicates by examining a collection of Zuni eating bowls. I use archival materials to reconstruct the culture of curatorship when the majority of the gifts of ethnological objects occurred.

DIANA GREENWOLD

CULTURAL SNAPSHOTS: UNDERSTANDING PHOTOGRAPHS AND OBJECTS AS COLLECTIONS THROUGH NMNH'S NORTHERN UTAH MATERIALS

"Carter's Celebrated Indian Stereoscopies," document Great Basin American Indians in Utah between 1865 and 1906. These photographs record tribes that have been largely ignored in the artifact record. My project considers the systematic potential of collections, be they photographs or objects, to create comprehensive "snap-shots" of a cultural group. I explore how photographs and objects can work in tandem with or in opposition to each other as

representational methods. In the case of the tribes of Northern Utah, I argue for the importance of Carter's images to embody groups whose material culture largely no longer survives.

ALEXANDER BRIER MARR

THE HISTORY WORK OF KIOWA MODEL TIPIS

From 1896 to 1904, James Mooney commissioned a recreation-in-miniature of the 1867 Kiowa Sun Dance tipi camp. Produced at a politically charged moment by a generation that not only moved from tipis to wooden houses, but also anticipated the imminent opening of the reservation to non-Natives, the model tipis perform multivalent cultural work. That work ranges from preserving Kiowa culture to mediating Kiowa notions of memory and home to professionalizing disciplinary anthropology. Using Mooney's notes, close looking, and extant literature I consider how the models both engendered external knowledge of Kiowa history and allowed Kiowas to relate to the past.

DISCUSSANTS

RICHARD KURIN

UNDER SECRETARY FOR HISTORY, ART, AND CULTURE

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

JOSHUA BELL

CURATOR

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

ANN McMULLEN

CURATOR

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

Session Two

Thursday, July 22nd, 1:00-3:30

MONICA SALAS LANDA

COLLECTING FRAGMENTS OF A MODERN AGE (1949-1953): ISABEL KELLY AMONG THE TAJIN

TOTONACS

New questions about the nature and outcome of foreign-local encounters have persuaded scholars to use material culture studies as an interpretative framework to approach the US presence in Latin-America. Following this trend, I will present a close reading of various ethnographic objects collected by Isabel Kelly, an American anthropologist who in 1948, conducted extensive fieldwork

among the Totonac Indians in Veracruz, Mexico. Her research was supported by the Institute of Social Anthropology, an autonomous unit of the Bureau of American Ethnology that operated with support from the United States Department of State. This collection is an invaluable source for understanding the United States' involvement in Mexico during the 1940's and 1950's. It reveals the way US forces interacted not only with the ideological projects of the Mexican state but also with those of local indigenous communities.

LAUREN DISALVO

CAST IN THE WORLD'S FAIR: CLASSICAL PLASTER CASTS AT THE 1904 LOUISIANA PURCHASE EXPOSITION IN ST. LOUIS

As part of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis the Department of Anthropology of the United States National Museum exhibited Assyrian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman plaster casts. Since a classically oriented exhibit seemed strange for this department, I became interested in investigating the function of these casts. There was evidently more to the exhibition than simply a display of ancient religions as was claimed by its director, Cyrus Adler. Instead, I will argue that these plaster casts, particularly the Greek and Roman casts, were displayed in order to promote the Smithsonian Institution as a vehicle of higher art.

WILLIAM FOSTER

GRIDLOCK ON THE PEYOTE ROAD

The Peyote Religion, which spread rapidly among Plains communities between 1870 and 1920 and served as the foundation of the Native American Church, would be further understood through a comparative study of its associated ritual objects. While ethnography has provided insight into the genesis and diffusion of Peyotism, there has been no systematic analysis of Peyote objects. Feather fans, present in all Peyote ceremonies, will be my primary focus. Recognizing patterned changes in the style and form of the fans will illuminate both the transformation of the religion as well as the communities and individuals that adhered to it.

JANICE FRISCH

STILL ON THE LOOM: UNFINISHED NAVAJO WEAVINGS

In Navajo weaving the period from 1880-1920 was marked by intense experimentation. Sparked by the introduction of new materials and encounters with the railroad and other forms of Euro-American material culture, this experimentation is evident in well known Navajo weaving styles such as the eye-dazzler and the pictorial. Another category of Navajo weaving in which the creativity of individual weavers is evident is unfinished weavings on model looms.

Usually used by collectors and museums for exploring or demonstrating the weaving process, I argue that these objects are also an ideal medium in which weavers could try new techniques or designs.

DISCUSSANTS

JAKE HOMIAK

*DIRECTOR, ANTHROPOLOGY COLLECTION AND ARCHIVES PROGRAM
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY*

CHARLES KOLB

*SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES*

AARON GLASS

*ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
BARD GRADUATE CENTER*

*Session Three
Friday, July 23rd, 9:30-12:00*

CHRISTOPHER PATRELLO

THE INTENTIONALITY OF LATE 19TH HAIDA ARGILLITE BOXES

In museums and art galleries, late 19th century Haida argillite boxes have been represented as both ephemeral items for non-indigenous consumption and, more recently, rare and expensive art-objects from the “Golden Age” of Haida art. This project focuses on the ways in which the formal and aesthetic shifts in carving styles represent a distinctly Haida viewpoint regarding the ways in which traditional hegemonic power structures were being disrupted by both internal and external sociocultural conflicts.

MARIA ELENA FRIAS

KINETIC HERITAGE: ITEMS FROM LT. GEORGE THORNTON EMMONS' TLINGIT COLLECTION

Increasingly museum studies scholars are turning their attention to collectors and their acquisition practices to understand how these factors shape knowledge about objects and peoples. My project focuses on the collector Lt. George Thornton Emmons and his collection of Tlingit items at NMAI and NMNH through archival materials, accession files, and his collecting corpus at both museums. By focusing on the collector, this research attempts to trace one aspect of the kinetic nature of museum objects through their flow out of source communities into the institution.

AMY CARATTINI

A CASE STUDY: THE MISCLASSIFICATION OF A JAPANESE INCENSE BOX

When artifacts are interpreted in a museum context, the cultural prioritization of the period can dominate. Thus records will neglect to document the knowledge that comes from the emic perspective. How different cultures prioritize certain senses, for example, may get overlooked or lost in translation. In my case study, I trace the cultural biography of a Japanese incense box and argue that it is more fully understood when read through more sources than what comes with the accession of the object. Literary sources and related artifacts from other institutions open up possibilities for translating the senses and for shaping perception.

KATE BISHOP

AFRICAN OCCASIONAL CLOTHS

Fusing Indonesian, Indian, and European textile innovations with African values and symbolism, African occasional cloths represent a material chronicle of politics, economics, and environmental change. A material and visual analysis of these articles provides a rich array of information appropriate to diverse lines of inquiry ranging from communication theory and dress to political ecology and the global textile industry. The iconography displayed on occasional cloths offers a flexible and multivocal vocabulary that allows African people an opportunity to express social solidarity, express aspirations for the future, and participate in the global conversation about the direction of society.

DISCUSSANTS

MARY JO ARNOLDI

CURATOR

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

GWYNEIRA ISAAC

CURATOR

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

AARON GLASS

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

BARD GRADUATE CENTER