

Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form. 50th Anniversary Edition. Bill Holm. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015. 144 pp.*

Reviewed by Megan A. Smetzer

Many successful Northwest Coast artists will readily admit they have never read Bill Holm's seminal introduction to the principles of nineteenth century Northwest Coast design. Rather, they have kept a copy, sometimes multiple copies, within easy reach to study and learn from the black-and-white illustrations of ovoids, u-forms and other components of formline design that Holm identified and named. Often called "the bible", *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form* explains "the rules" of the art form. Originally published in 1965, this slim volume has had a profound effect on artists as well as scholars, collectors and the general public as it has defined the language used to discuss and understand some Indigenous arts of this region.

In this 50th anniversary edition, four artists, Evelyn Vanderhoop (Haida), Joe David (Nuu-chah-nulth), Nathan Jackson (Tlingit), and Robert Davidson (Haida), fondly recollect their relationships with Bill Holm. Each explains how he contributed to their design understanding and acquisition of technical abilities through informal conversations, classes, and hands on learning. This section is less about their use of this book, and more about Bill Holm's humble nature, depth of knowledge, and generosity.

Holm points out a few things he would change about the 1965 edition in his new preface. Most significantly, he would add "northern" to the title to clarify that the majority of his examples are Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian, not central or southern Northwest Coast designs, which are quite different. This is an important distinction as artistic practices from further south have been marginalized in the literature and within the art market until very recently, due in part to the book's ubiquity, which has had over 130,000 copies printed to date.

This influential volume, enriched in this edition by color drawings and photographs, will remain a significant touchstone in the ever-increasing scholarship examining the cultural expressions of indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast of North America. Artists will continue to (not) read it and academics will continue to debate how its aesthetic focus has shaped contemporary understandings of the entire region, practices that will no doubt continue for at least another 50 years.

Megan A. Smetzer is an art historian based in Vancouver, BC. She teaches, publishes, and lectures on historic and contemporary Northwest Coast indigenous cultural expressions, focusing on women's artistic practices. She is currently working on her book Painful Beauty: Tlingit Women, Beadwork, and the Art of Resilience.

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