

broader culture" (p. 1). Certainly the career of Ralph Rinzler exemplifies the way in which movement ideas went into the broader culture. His work at the Smithsonian sparked the "public folklore" movement that led to the penetration of the American federal arts establishment by the folk revivalists turned folklorists. But that particular process is not described here.

Instead the authors point out that most of those who have written about the folksong revival have tended "to miss, or at least downplay, some fundamentally important connections between culture and politics, which continue to represent the sixties in the popular consciousness" (p. 2), and write of their frustration, for example, with Robert Cantwell's *When We Were Good* in the way in which Cantwell separates "the folk revival from the political movements that were taking place at the same time" (p. 2). It is true that most who have written on the subject have viewed the music's radical political connections as peripheral or parallel concerns, or as intellectual entry points abandoned once aesthetic engagement is achieved, rather than the driving force behind it. At the same time other scholars have portrayed the collectors of folksong whose activities underpin all folksong revivals as workers in a conservative anti-modern project in support of "tradition."

So the authors' task is twofold. They must demonstrate the centrality of social-political movement thought within these music, and mount a theoretical argument that moves "tradition" away from dialectical opposition to "progress" into a position in which it is seen as a concept with its own dialectics of innovation and conservatism. These are the concerns of the book's first two chapters: to establish the relevance of humanistic concerns within the theoretical politics of contemporary sociology. Their key term, the work's analytic mantra, is "cognitive praxis": "the knowledge-producing activities that are carried out within social movements." Their aim, as they state, "is to redirect the cognitive approach to music and to consider musical expression in social movements as a kind of cognitive praxis" (p. 7).

The rest of the book consists of "substantive analyses of the mobilization of music, and the making and remaking of musical traditions, within social movements" (p. 5). Examining first American folk music in political contexts from populism through the popular front, they focus upon key figures like Carl Sandburg, John and Alan Lomax, the Seeger family and Woody Guthrie. Then they turn to African American music, moving from DuBois to black power. Next comes a chapter on politics and music in the 1960s, and finally a chapter on "The Swedish Music Movement" covering the period between the 1960s and the 1990s.

This promising combination of theory and date is, unfortunately, beset with problems of distance and abstraction. Although considerable space is devoted to various movements, all are described in the most general of ways; even when given names, dates and places, the reader is rushed along through the civil rights movement, or the popular front, or

the Swedish music movement so quickly that one never really gets a good sense of the inner workings of any particular movement vis-à-vis the music in it. It is frustrating to read about the civil rights movement and not learn much beyond the fact that singing at sit-ins was central to the creation of solidarity rather than peripheral to the political facts of the sit-ins. I agree, but why not tell us why and how, and give some specifics? How, for example, did the "Mississippi Caravan of Music" (p. 101), or the Swedish "tent" project (p. 144) actually operate to create cognitive praxis? Alas, the level of narrative is too general to allow for such description.

The authors suggest that from the sociological perspective, this work breaks new ground in its serious attention to humanistic data music. But from the viewpoint of the student of music, it does not go nearly far enough. A fundamental problem is that many of the music they discuss were themselves defined and promoted self-consciously as social movements. Thus there is frequent reference here to blues, but nothing is said about the long, deep and conflicted history of the blues movement. This failure to problematize words that describe musical genres like blues and, most notably, "folk music" and "folksong" limits the theoretical utility of this work. And it would have been a stronger book had the authors chosen to examine fewer movements in greater depth.

Museum Review / Muséologie

Transcending Borders: The Bold New World of Collaboration in Museums,

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Across Borders: Beadwork in Iroquois Life is an exhibition celebrating the significance of beadwork in Iroquois society and responds admirably to the goals of collaborative museum exhibiting set forth by the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples (1992).¹ The exhibition's title refers to the political and social barriers that the various Iroquois nations have traversed since European contact. Perhaps a better title to capture the essence of the exhibition would be *Transcending Borders*; for the exhibit demonstrates that many of the borders we perceive to exist are, in fact, imaginary. For example, the six nations that comprise the Hodeasaunee straddle the U.S.-Canadian border; their confederacy has endured despite the imposition of a "New World" political boundary. *Across Borders* transcends other less-tangible borders such as the seemingly incompatible natures of academic research and oral traditions and the Western museological tradition of treating First Peoples as objects versus First Peoples' assertion of their identity and agency. *Across Borders* makes great strides to prove that these dichotomies are false.

Across Borders is the result of a collaborative effort between the McCord Museum, the Castellani Art Museum of

Niagara University, the Kenien'kehaka Raotiohkwa Cultural Center in Kahnawake, the Tuscarora Nation community beadworkers within New York state and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. The exhibition recognizes different kinds of knowledge by including information from oral traditions and interviews with beadwork artists as well as from academic research in the text panels and artifact labels. This kind of collaboration surpasses the token efforts of consultation too often made by museums after the curatorial process is firmly established. Iroquois and non-First Nations curators worked together on both the design and the interpretation of the exhibit. Such collaboration between First Nations and non-Aboriginal people in a traditional museum setting raises several challenging questions. Institutional authority, museological procedures, the rights to information and its use and academic freedom are questioned when these two groups interact in the "contact zone" (Ames, 1999: 41-42).

Clifford suggests that when museums are seen as contact zones "their organizing structure as a *collection* becomes an ongoing historical, political and moral *relationship*—a power-charged set of exchanges," in which the processes of the colonial encounter are unfinished (1997: 192). As a contact zone, he envisions museums as potential theatres for continuing negotiations between the protagonists of the colonial narrative. By allowing First Peoples increased access to their material culture and a more prominent voice in the interpretation of their heritage, the colonial encounter will continue but the balance of power may be redressed.

Across Borders combines over 300 beaded objects with oral histories, photography and written archives to create a nuanced interpretation of Iroquois beadwork. The works on display range from political and historical documents such as the "Two-Dog Wampum," which represents an 18th-century peace agreement between the Mohawk of Kahnasatà:ke and the French colonists, to household items, clothing and tourist curios. This diversity of material demonstrates the pervasiveness of beadwork in Iroquois society. The creation of beadwork is not simply a leisure activity. Its importance can be understood only in relation to Iroquois kinship, history and cosmology.

The exhibition describes the production of Iroquois beadwork by presenting the raw materials used such as bone, shell, wampum and porcupine quills. It also explains the patterns and sewing methods employed in making beadwork. But Iroquois beadwork is not treated as a mere craft, even the descriptions of production make lateral connections that convey the social significance of beadwork. One text panel describes how the creation of beadwork unites all generations. Children assist the beadworkers by sorting beads while listening to elders speak of how previous generations of their families lived. Thus, "the process of making beadwork evokes memories and connects the Iroquois to their ancestors" (*Across Borders* text).

Across Borders is a stylish, sophisticated exhibition; certainly what one would expect from a large, metropolitan museum like the McCord. The themes flow progressively and

each section is carefully identified for the visitor to follow in sequence. Its layout, however, is far from linear and its design cleverly creates a variety of spaces that individualize each theme. One of the most striking examples is the section introducing the Iroquois creation story, which was intended to create a sacred and timeless space. The narrative, developed by Kanataktá and Dr. Rickard,² tells of a pregnant woman who fell through the hole in the Sky World left by an uprooted tree. The characters and motifs from this story are essential to the repertoire of the Iroquois beadworker. Proceeding from the introductory section, the visitor enters a circular space formed by eight tall, narrow showcases. The area is covered with a translucent midnight blue canopy speckled with golden stars. A soundscape of the Iroquois Thanksgiving Address complements the visual impression of a sacred space. Each showcase features artifacts that represent different themes from the Iroquois creation story; for example, the flock of birds that caught pregnant woman as she fell from the Sky World. Turtles, birds, flowers and fruit are common elements of Iroquois beadwork. This narrative lays the foundation upon which the exhibition is built. Only through understanding the Iroquois cosmology can the visitor appreciate the patterns and motifs that recur in Iroquois beadwork. Thus, the beadwork is portrayed not simply as an art, but an exercise in spiritual expression and preservation.

While the quality of the exhibition's design matches that of any international blockbuster, there are several notable innovations that distinguish *Across Borders* from other high-profile exhibitions of First Nations' material culture. A significant and refreshing difference is the exhibition's emphasis on *real* people—how the beadwork affects the lives of real Iroquois both of the past and the present. This idea is expressed in several ways. Firstly, many of the exhibit's photographs include the names of their subjects on their labels. The introductory section features large-format photographs of Iroquois women and children wearing beaded clothing. Their names and the names of their communities are the primary information the visitor sees on the labels—an inspiring change from the standard "object name, accession number, date" format and one that allows the visitor to identify more intimately with the subjects of the exhibition. There are also quotes from the beadworkers whose creations appear in the exhibit. Rosemary Hill, for example, describes how she was inspired by a Victorian table covering she viewed at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

The simple acts of naming the subjects of a photograph and quoting living artists intimates a fundamental, if implicit theme of *Across Borders*; that is, the agency of First Peoples. Through themes such as "Marketing," *Across Borders* challenges the conventional view that the Iroquois and other First Peoples were passive bystanders to the European conquest of the New World. While the Iroquois adapted their life-ways to co-exist with the Europeans, they did not submit to cultural obliteration. The exhibition asserts that the wearing of clothing embellished with elaborate beadwork was an important

way affirming Iroquois identity and sovereignty during the period of cultural repression. Beadwork was also adapted after the European colonization of the New World. The Iroquois incorporated new materials and eventually produced pin-cushions and broom holders to furnish Victorian homes and curios to satisfy the tourist market. Far from enculturation, *Across Borders* contends that these adaptations were demonstrations of entrepreneurial savvy on the part of the Iroquois. They capitalized on the 19th-century European romanticization of "primitive" or "natural" peoples. Travelling Iroquois actors fabricated stories of stereotypical warriors and chiefs to gratify the European taste for adventure and the exotic. The Iroquois constructed a representation of themselves to survive in the European New World, not to conform to it.

The Iroquois of today do not see the creation of beadwork as a nostalgic activity for those who long for the past. It has developed a distinctive style while maintaining historical traditions. Kanatakta describes the increasing popularity of beadwork in Kahnawake; for example, beaded attire is replacing ball gowns and tuxedos at high school graduation ceremonies (Rollins, 1999: 4). Beadwork continues to play an important role in the assertion of Iroquois identity as it is often presented as gifts during diplomatic meetings.

Across Borders should spark debate among anthropologists, museum professionals and First Peoples interested in the interpretation and presentation of First Nations' material culture. Perhaps more importantly, the exhibition is accessible to the general public. It is visually captivating and while the text is abundant, it is not overwhelming or impenetrable. When viewing an exhibition I like to judge its effectiveness by the reactions of my fellow visitors. At one of *Across Borders'* video booths, a gentleman urged me to listen to the soundtrack "en stéréo." Describing the voice of Joanne Shenadoah, he made a comment that could also apply to the entire exhibition, "C'est magnifique!"

Across Borders: Beadwork in Iroquois Life was exhibited at the McCord Museum from June 1999 to January 2000. From Montreal it will travel to the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University in New York State, the Royal Ontario

Museum in Toronto and the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution at the George Gustav Heye Centre in New York City.

Notes

- 1 The relationship between Canadian museums and First Nations was brought to public attention with the Glenbow Museum's 1988 exhibit *The Spirit Sings*, which was boycotted by the Lubicon Cree. In the wake of considerable dissension, the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association established a Task Force on Museums and First Peoples which published recommendations designed to facilitate and promote the development of partnerships between First Peoples and cultural institutions throughout Canada.
- 2 Kanatakta, a Mohawk from Kahnawake and the Executive Director of the Kenien'kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Center, and Dr. Jolene Rickard, a Tuscarora art historian and photographer are members of the exhibit's nine-person curatorial team.

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