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In Honor of Lévi-Strauss

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► **To cite this version:**

Marie Mauzé. In Honor of Lévi-Strauss. *European Review of Native American Studies*, 1990, 4 (1), pp.51-53. halshs-01324522

HAL Id: halshs-01324522

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01324522>

Submitted on 1 Jun 2016

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EXHIBITIONS

In Honor of Lévi-Strauss

Les Amériques de Claude Lévi-Strauss, an exhibition shown at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris from 11 October 1989 to 25 April 1990, was coordinated by Professor Jean Guiart, head of the ethnology department of the museum, and Bernard Dupaigne, curator of ethnology, assisted by D. Lévine, in charge of the North American collections, Marion Rembur, and Anne Vitart. Jean Guiart and Bernard Dupaigne wished to pay tribute to Claude Lévi-Strauss on the occasion of his 80th birthday, who before becoming vice-director of the ethnology department at the Musée de l'Homme in 1948, had collected about 1,400 ethnographic objects during his expeditions in the Mato Grosso (Brazil) between 1935 and 1938.¹ The intention of the show was to illustrate various aspects of Lévi-Strauss's oeuvre, to exemplify through the display of artifacts from the Mato Grosso and the Northwest Coast a link between a scholar and a continent and its first inhabitants, as well as to convey to the public the idea that the Northwest Coast cultures are still alive.

Les Amériques de Claude Lévi-Strauss has brought together a few hundred Brazilian and around fifty Northwest Coast artifacts — among them sixteen lent by the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology (Vancouver) and about twelve from Bill Reid's private collection. The exhibition occupies some 300 square meters and is divided into two major parts. The Mato Grosso section opens with a painting in neo-classical style, entitled "Indien donnant le signal de l'attaque," by Jean-Baptist Debret (ca. 1827), a painter who in 1816 had joined a team of French artists sent to Brazil to create an Academy of Fine Arts. The artifacts exhibited are for the most part those that Lévi-Strauss brought back from his expeditions



Claude Lévi-Strauss and Bill Reid in the Haida canoe "Lootas" being rowed into Paris. Photograph by D. Ponsard, Musée de l'Homme.

among the Nambikwara, the Caduveo, and the Bororo. The curatorial choice was to present the Brazilian artifacts not as art objects but to show them in their traditional context — daily life or ritual — worn or carried by groups of stylized manikins. This rather non-innovative form of ethnographic display was conceived to illustrate descriptions provided by Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques*; positions and gestures of the manikins were reconstructed from photographs taken by him during his fieldwork in the Mato Grosso.²

The first tableau represents a Nambikwara encampment with utensils scattered on the ground (gourds, wooden mortars, woven baskets) and a family of three people: a man with his hunting gear returning from the hunt with four aras, a woman piercing a shell with a sharp pointed stick, a child carrying a small monkey; inside a precarious shed made of palm leaves two people are busy delousing one another. The overall arrangement is meant to convey the state of poverty that struck this population in the 1930s. The Caduveo are presented in a traditional house made of a frame-

work of trunks, which supports cross-beams and a roof of palm leaves: a man resting in a hammock, women wearing pewter jewelry sitting on a bunk, children playing outside with wooden toys, decorated pottery containers scattered on the ground. The most spectacular case is the one dedicated to a Bororo funeral ceremony. Manikins representing male dancers are displayed in ceremonial regalia comprising among other adornments emblazoned penis sheaths, crescent shaped pendants made of tatu's claws and decorated with mother of pearl inlays, and colorful feather head-dresses consisting of a fan-shaped diadem, the most beautiful of which Lévi-Strauss obtained in exchange for a gun and after negotiations lasting for a week. This section is completed by a group of fragile drawings (made with vegetal pigments) by Caduveo women of motifs used in body paintings, and by paintings of feather diadems by Raymond Lévi-Strauss, father of the anthropologist.

The transition between the two Americas is brought about by the display of stuffed animals borrowed from the Museum National d'Histoire Na-



Statue of a shaman; wood, leather, horn, hair. Tsimshian, British Columbia. Musée de l'Homme 51.35.2 (C. Lévi-Strauss coll.). Photo courtesy Musée de l'Homme.

turelle; these animals — nightjar, howler, sloth, and great ant-eater — hold a significant place in the mythology of indigenous America and are the main characters studied by Lévi-Strauss in *La Potière jalouse*. Leaving *Tristes Tropiques* and *Les Mythologiques*, and before getting to *La Voie des masques*, the topic of split representation and its two styles is dealt with by means of a rafter from New Caledonia (exemplifying the horizontal plane type) and a Kwakiutl transformation mask (showing the symmetric vertical plane characterizing the Northwest Coast art style).

The second section of the exhibition is devoted to Northwest Coast art, discovered by Lévi-Strauss and other French exiles — most of them surrealists — in New York in 1942. After Max Ernst had first discovered a Haida spoon in an antique shop, Ernst himself, André Breton, George Duthuit, and Lévi-Strauss teamed together to buy pieces that sometimes, despite their low price at the time, they could not afford to buy on their own. The exhibition displays pieces that were sold in 1950 to the Musée de l'Homme:³ a Kwakiutl transformation mask, a carved figure of a Tsimshian shaman, a Tsimshian headdress (dragonfly? or raven), and a Tlingit helmet that Lévi-Strauss bought from Max Ernst. A Dzonogwa figure that once belonged to Ernst (now part of the Musée de l'Homme collection) is also on display. One can only regret that the museum staff realized just a

few days before the opening of the show that Duthuit's Northwest Coast objects were too fragile to be displayed, and that the curator did not attempt to borrow the pieces acquired from Lévi-Strauss by the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (Leiden). The idea of displaying pieces obtained at the same time under the same conditions by a group of artists and intellectuals who shared the same passion would have been not only of great interest from the history of collecting point of view, but would also have been an adequate way of celebrating the most famous French anthropologist. Kwakiutl, Nootka, and Salish masks (Dzonogwa, Xwexwe, Swaixwe, Frog) and coppers referring to *La Voie des masques* constitute the most striking part of the Northwest Coast section, unless the visitor's attention is caught by two exquisite pieces from the Dominique Dubosc collection: a Haida raven rattle and a Tlingit knife handle carved out of ivory in the shape of a bear's head crowned by a frog.

A fairly prominent place is given to Bill Reid⁴ — the first living artist ever exhibited in this institution.⁵ The visitor who chooses to start with the Northwest Coast section is welcomed by a wooden panel painted after one of Reid's designs by some of the members of the Haida delegation during the opening of the exhibition. An emerald green pond has been installed in front of the panel to display a small-scale bronze replica of Reid's bronze Killer Whale commissioned for the Vancouver Public Aquarium. The objects presented in *Les Amériques de Lévi-Strauss*, carvings, jewels, prints, bronze miniatures, etc., offer a wide array of Reid's bestiary inspired by Haida myths and stories, and also provide a good illustration of the artist's talent to explore and master new techniques and the plastic possibilities of various materials (wood, gold, bronze, etc.). The fifteen meter long canoe "Lootas," made out of one big log according to traditional techniques, is now installed in the museum hall, after having been rowed on the Seine by a crew of a dozen young Haida men from Rouen to Paris (27 September to 2 October). The coming of the Haida delegation with its elders, rowers, dancers, and singers remained indeed the most publicized event of the whole show.

The sensitive visitor may complain about the brightness of the red material covering the stands of the exhibition cases, or the use of dummy heads also painted in a red that does

not match the refinement of the Tsimshian dragonfly(?) headdress or that of the Tlingit face mask; one may also debate the use of dummy heads to display masks in a contemporary museum setting. The presence of a halibut hook suspended in the case dedicated to miniaturized argillite and wooden artifacts as examples of curio art may seem awkward. But these are minor complaints. Labels do not identify each type of objects; instead they refer to short texts chosen by Lévi-Strauss from his own writings. More imagination and intellectual ambition would have contributed to better account for Lévi-Strauss's deep interest in art, an aspect which was partly ignored by the show.

In honor of Canadian native culture and echoing *Les Amériques de Lévi-Strauss*, the cultural services of the Canadian embassy in Paris organized an exhibition of photographs, *The Heart of the World*, by the talented photographer Dennis Darragh of Vancouver. Darragh's images of the Stein valley, a sacred site of the Salish people threatened by logging, were displayed at the Maison Mansart (12 October–5 November 1989), at the Canadian Culture Center (12 October–9 December 1989), and at the Musée de l'Homme.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Claude Lévi-Strauss published extracts of his writings, especially those dealing with art and symbolic thought, under the title *Des Symboles et leurs doubles* (Paris 1989: Plon); to this anthology are added an article by Jean Guiart on the analysis of myths, and another one by Martine Reid on Northwest Coast art, Bill Reid, and the art renaissance (part of which had already been published in *The Spirit Sings*, Calgary 1988: Glenbow Museum). *Le Petit journal de Musée de l'Homme* dedicated an issue (no date, no number) to the exhibition, which features contributions by Jean Guiart, Bill Reid, Marie-Barbara Le Gonidec, Susana Monzon, and Marion Rembur. Bill Reid and Robert Bringhurst published a French version of *The Raven Steals the Light* (Vancouver 1984: Douglas & McIntyre) under the title *Le Dit du corbeau* (translated by Christiane Thiollier, with a foreword by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Paris 1989: Atelier Alpha Bleue).

Marle Mauzé

NOTES

1. Caduveo and Bororo artifacts collected by C. Lévi-Strauss in 1935–1936 were exhibited in Paris at the Galerie de la "Gazette

des Beaux Arts" et de "Beaux Arts" in 1937 (21 January–3 February); see the *guide-catalogue* (1937) of the exhibition: "Indiens du Matto Grosso (Mission Claude et Dina Lévi-Strauss, novembre 1935–mars 1936)," reprinted in *Bulletin du musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro*, Les Cahiers de Gradhiva 9 (Paris 1989: Éditions Jean-Michel Place), 275–287.

2. Photographs taken by Lévi-Strauss during his fieldwork among the Caduveo and Bororo were exhibited in Reuilly at the Congrès des Gens d'images (20–22 October 1989), and at the Musée Niepce in Chalon-sur-Saône (December 1989–January 1990).
3. Lévi-Strauss's Northwest Coast collection

SUPPORT

"Victims of the Nuclear Club": An Interview with Tom LaBlanc

As a result of a combined effort of various European human rights, anti-nuclear, and environmental groups, as well as the Green Party, Tom LaBlanc was invited to tour several European countries. The main message to be propagated was: "Leave the uranium in the ground." The trip served to inform about the impact of the nuclear fuel cycle on indigenous peoples, and to establish a network of potential supporters. The following interview was conducted in Vienna on 30 November 1989 by Peter Schwarzbauer of the Association for Endangered Peoples — Austria, the organizer of Tom's visit to Vienna.

P.S.: As a representative of the Indigenous Uranium Forum, can you tell me something about the history of this group?

T.L.B.: The Indigenous Uranium Forum was conceived in 1985 and 1986 during the Anti-Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Conferences in Japan by delegates from the Saskatchewan Cree and from the American Indian Movement (AIM)/International Indian Treaty Council (IITC). It was formed at the first Global Radiation Victims Conference in New York City in the fall of 1987, when 30 indigenous activists on anti-nuclear struggles came from Australia, the Marshall Islands, Same from Norway, and from North America.

P.S.: What are the goals of the group?

T.L.B.: We are trying to give a voice for indigenous peoples to the international anti-nuclear movement. For our struggles, for the causes that affected us in the nuclear chain, for radiation victims, for Navajo uranium

miners, for Western Shoshone resisting the Nevada test site and national high level radioactive waste disposal, for Saskatchewan Cree concerning uranium mining, for Australian Aborigines who are also affected by uranium mining, for Marshall Islanders and other indigenous peoples in the Pacific being affected by nuclear tests of Britain, France, and the United States, and for such people as the Same in Norway and Finland, who are affected by the fallout of Chernobyl. We are trying to maintain our local activities and advocate our position in the international anti-nuclear movement.

4. The first exhibition of Bill Reid's work in Paris, *Bill Reid et la renaissance de l'art*, was organized at the Maison Mansart in 1986 (20 August–14 September).
5. Or so they say. In fact, the American Indian Workshop's *Affiches indiens d'Amérique du Nord* in 1982 featured the works of a number of contemporary Native American artists (Editor's note).

was acquired in 1950 by the Musée de l'Homme (Paris) and the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (Leiden)—a few pieces were bought by André Malraux and Jacques Lacan (see C. Lévi-Strauss, D. Erbon, *De Près et de loin* (Paris 1988: Odile Jacob).

P.S.: Can you tell me about yourself, and how you became involved in this type of work?

T.L.B.: I was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. My mother is a Sisseton Dakota in South Dakota. I got involved in AIM in 1970. I worked in the Minneapolis chapter and in the Little Crow AIM chapter in Sisseton, in the Sisseton warrior society in South Dakota. My family participated in the founding of the IITC in Standing Rock. In 1982 I began to work at the Information Office in San Francisco, primarily for Bill Wahpepah, primarily in the capacity of researching documentation and public relations. He assigned me to work on anti-nuclear issues. I went to the Anti-Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Conference in Japan in '85, '86, and '87. There I got involved in the Global Radiation Victims Conference. Me and Grace Smallwood, an Australian Aborigine, were appointed as international preparatory committee members for indigenous radiation victims. I was supposed to represent all the indigenous struggles from North America and it was just inconceivable for me that I am appointed

as an elected official of the above groups. I basically got involved through the IITC and AIM. So I try to reach out to as many activists as I can and am respecting their self-determination and their autonomy in their own areas. I have tried to get as many of them together and to create interest and information-flow about their cause and involve them in the struggle. And that brings me right here now.

P.S.: Do you think that your cause stands a chance against the powerful economic and partly also military interests you are facing?

T.L.B.: I believe our spirituality, our aboriginal land rights and treaty rights are being ignored throughout the world. There seems to be a pattern to perpetuate nuclear colonialism, where the industrialized nations can benefit from the nuclear industry. We are affected by it from the front end to the back end and all the aspects between. We present to the anti-nuclear movement positions that a lot of other citizens throughout the world can't present, such as our spirituality. Many of our religions, if you call them that, are anti-nuclear. We have tried to create attention for the Havasupai in the Grand Canyon; Energy Fuels (with Swiss connections) are attempting to mine uranium in the Grand Canyon. Or we tried to create attention for Mount Taylor, which is sacred to the Pueblos and the Navajo; four Japanese utility companies just bought from the U.S. five million pounds of yellow-cake. We are trying to assist and advocate for the cleaning up of the Rio Puerco, for abandoned mines, for tailings that are left, for improving our health. We try to assist the Saskatchewan Cree concerning the devastation from the uranium industry, which is done to them. We are very concerned about the Baker Lake situation in the Northwest Territories in Canada. I am personally encouraged. I see more indigenous or Indian activists becoming more determined and better equipped to deal with the problem. And I am seeing strong support from throughout the world, from Europe and Asia. Even in the United States we are seeing some good support. I am not intimidated by their wealth or overwhelmed by their so-called intelligence, because it seems that they can't resolve the problems once they take the uranium out of the ground. They immediately release poisons and they can't deal with it. I think we are in the right position, we are fighting for our lives and for the world. I think people from throughout the