Art Books and Books as Art: Promoting Research in Art

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I would like to say first of all that I am not an artist, nor an expert in art. I am, however, a publisher of art and one who appreciates the representation of life in art forms. I am grateful to UNESCO not only for providing me the opportunity to discuss research and publishing about art, but for the excuse to spend time pouring over my own art books that I have collected in the course of my work and travels.

Second, I apologize for my late arrival. I have been in the Marshall Islands, conducting a workshop so that people there might research and write their own book about Marshallese culture. Because I have not had the chance to listen to half the presentations, I apologize in advance if I repeat information that some of you have already covered.

Third, I am honoured to be included in this very important forum with such gifted practitioners.

The Context of Studying Art

Nicholas Thomas (1995:9) pointed out, we have to look beyond the surface to the parts and composition, and even further to the context. He wrote about studying art. Today, I'm going to speak about studying art. Far more is written by outsiders about Pacific art than by insiders. This is, in some ways, not unreasonable as, in terms of world population, outsiders vastly outnumber insiders, and as, in terms of education in art and how to study it in written form, foreigners vastly outnumber Pacific Islanders. Nevertheless, Pacific Islands publishers have produced a vast array of publications from which people can study art.

Publishing is Art

As I have said elsewhere (Crowl 1999b:112), publishing is neither factory nor secretarial work. Publishing is a craft, an art form in and of itself. Publishing is one of the Pacific's newest art forms: printing by machine press began in Tahiti in 1817. Nevertheless, fewer than 200 years later, the Pacific Islands have a wealth of publishing artisans and entrepreneurs. Publishing provides the opportunity to combine text and image, to explore the interaction between linguistic and visual arts. Although publishing itself is an imported craft, it offers Pacific peoples opportunities to study and to share indigenous, local, and insider expressions of art. This use of technology for distinctly Pacific expressions is not essentially different from the history of publishing throughout the world.

The Economics of Publishing

The problems of educational development in island states are many. Because of small populations at great distances, these states cannot achieve economies of scale in any way comparable with larger countries. Bacchus and Brock (1993) outlined the limited pool of finance and skills, the challenge of many and undeveloped languages, and the lack of equipment and materials even to begin to develop curricula. The constraints are many, but the possibilities are endless and rich with potential. Nowhere else on earth has the cultural diversity, thus artistic diversity, of the Pacific Islands. The challenge is to recognize resources and to weave them together to promote research about art. I acknowledge and laud the
curricula that ministries of education have produced, but I leave discussion of that work to the people here from the ministries who are more qualified than I am to address their own publications. This paper points to publishing beyond curriculum development units (CDUs), to resources that CDUs can find close to home and could use to create art curricula. Despite the small size of Pacific Islands, communication does not always flow in every direction. Professional people are often so busy in their work that they are not aware of research and publications that other offices have done in the past.

**Art Centres, Councils, Institutes, and Schools**

The Pacific Islands have long had institutions to encourage and to assist the study of art. I discuss just some of them below. The Cook Islands National Heritage Project has published about canoe making (McCormack & Künzlé 1995). Fiji has an Arts Club and an Arts Council; the latter offers classes in painting and coordinates Fiji's participation in regional arts festivals (for which, see below). The Fiji Museum houses a fantastic collection of cultural items and has published catalogues of them (eg Clunie 1986). Besides its journal, *Domodomo*, it has published studies on pottery making and mat weaving.

The regional government of Irian Jaya published *The Art of Woodcarving in Irian Jaya* (Hoogerbrugge 1977). In New Caledonia, the Tjibaou Cultural Centre opened in 1998. Its previous incarnation, the Agence pour le Développement de la Culture Kanak, published about architecture (Boulay 1990), dance and music (Ammann 1997), and sculpture (Boulay 1992). In addition to its lovely library and media facilities, the Tjibaou Cultural Centre publishes a journal, *Mwa Vée*, and individual books. It also sells other publishers' books in its gift shop. Niue's Community Affairs published a book about pandanus weaving (Cole & Kulatea 1996).

In Papua New Guinea, the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies (IPNGS) was founded in 1975 to overcome the sense of loss of cultural identity due to a rapidly changing society (IPNGS 1977). It encouraged new art forms such as iron welding, copper beating, and acrylic painting. It published a vast literature, including works about music (Gourlay 1974, Strathern 1974, Talyaga 1975). The history of IPNGS is a sad one in that bureaucrats thought that it would be more efficient if it were part of a bigger operation, so they first put it under the National Research Institute, then later moved it to the National Cultural Commission. Very little art and very few publications have come out of IPNGS since. Its building is dilapidated, threatening what art and publications are stored there. The bookshop is full of dust and, when I visited there in 1997, someone with no interest in art minded the door (the till was not busy). Its most active programme now is music (eg Niles 2000, Yamada 1997, Zahn 1996), thanks to Don Niles. The Goroka Film Institute has produced fabulous footage of many aspects of PNG culture, including its art. The University of Papua New Guinea has a Centre for Creative Arts, which published local writing. The National Museum published *Pottery of Papua New Guinea, the National Collection* (NMAG 1977).

In Samoa, Ernesto Coter directs the Fine Arts School at Leulumoea Fou College, and he assisted with art publications from the Festival of Pacific Arts held in Apia in 1996. We may see studies of art coming from the new Institute of Samoan Studies at the National University of Samoa. In Solomon Islands, the Seventh-day Adventist school, Betikama, teaches art and sells its products through its shop. There is hope of studies of art coming from the Institute of Solomon Islands Studies, a joint effort by the Solomon Islands Museum, the University of the South Pacific Centre, and the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education - all of which have already published works by Solomon Islanders.
In Tonga, 'I. Futa Helu, one of the Pacific's deepest thinkers, founded 'Atenisi Institute and, using informal education and evening classes, developed it from the mid-1960s. The university was formally established in 1975, and its degree programme began in 1976. 'Atenisi is independent of church and state, an unusual arrangement in Tonga ('AU 1989). The University published a study of Tongan dance (Velt 1991). Elsewhere, the Tonga Visitors' Bureau published about baskets (Ottovar 1994).

In Vanuatu, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre has published about art (eg Bonnemaison et al 1997, Kanegai 1994, Tarisesei 1995). The Fédération des Œuvres Laïques (FOL) offered pottery classes and the Institut National de Technologie du Vanuatu (INTV) offered art courses. Nicolai Michoutouchkine and Aloi Pilioko have a foundation under which they provide space and materials for creative activity at their property Esnaar. They sell the works through their shop on Port Vila's main street. A catalogue of some of their collection is available (Ivanova & Michoutouchkine 1989), as well as biographies of themselves (Pilioko 1980, Teissier-Landgraf 1995a&b).


The University of the South Pacific created the Institute of Pacific Studies (IPS) in 1976. Within its mandate of academic studies, IPS also supported art and creativity through workshops in the region (see eg Crowl 1995, P. Hereniko 1986). It has published books about art in general (Chick 1978; Tausie 1980, 1981) and specifically about architecture (Coiffier 1988, H.E. Maude 1980, Tuita in prep), artists (P. Hereniko 1986, Pilioko 1980, Teissier-Landgraf 1995 a&b), material culture or crafts (Cole and Kulatea 1996; James 1988; Koch 1984, 1987; Mescam 1989; Pule 1983; Tabualevu et al 1997), music (Koch 2000), and string figures (Honor Maude et al 2001). The IPS publications started with a $ 5,000 grant from the government of Nauru. Instead of giving away the publications, IPS sold them and created a revolving fund for more publications. We can always begin work on new publications, then, having shown that we have done most of the work, we find that agencies are willing to contribute a bit of money to help finish the project. Our experience has proved that getting on with the research, the writing, and the publishing is most important, and the money will follow. Willpower and creativity are more essential than money.

USP has many other creative outlets. Although the USP Council passed a resolution in 1991, and the Teasdales authored a report in 1992, recommending support for expressive arts, it was not until Dr William Clarke at IPS organized a regional consultation in 1996 that action happened. He asked Ulli and Georgina Beier (who had been prime motivators of art and creative writing in Papua New Guinea) to run the consultation, and invited representatives from around the region. The consultation recommended that the university create a new body to support art: this became the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture in 1997 directed by Professor Epeli Hau’ofa and initially assisted by the Beiers. The Centre supports carvers, dancers, and painters, and has been instrumental in promoting their work internationally,
through exhibitions and performances. The Centre has also hosted an evening lecture series for the general public. (See Teaero 1999:39-40.)

Other movements at the university include Teweiariki Teaero's Expressive Arts programme with courses offered through extension, Niu Waves, and the Pacific Writing Forum. The former has textbooks on art education and integrated arts; the latter two have published art in their books and journals. The University of the South Pacific Centres in 12 countries have published works about architecture (H.E. Maude 1980), artists (Teissier-Landgraf 1995a&b), music (Herrmann 1988, Morgan 1986), performance (T. Austin 1981), and string figures (Honor Maude et al 2001).

Weaving In Other Strands

International agencies have published and assisted publication of books throughout the Pacific Islands. For example, UNESCO published The Art of the Sepik Area, New Guinea (Guiart 1970) and The Samoan Fale (Higginson et al 1992). The Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu have artists associations (Crowl 1999a, Regenvanu 1996:312-313). Historical societies have a role to play in recording art and architecture. For example, the Levuka Historical and Cultural Society published a Historical Guide to Levuka (Stemp 1994) and Levuka: Living Heritage (Gibson et al 2001), both of which demonstrate rich and enduring monuments to artisans and builders.

Research about Art Production and Outlets

Every person, group, studio, and factory of art and craft has a history and mode of operation. Every market and shop selling art and craft also has a history and mode of operation. Publication of these histories and modes of operation would add to our knowledge of artistic endeavour and cultural enterprise. In the Cook Islands, we find Beachcomber and Island Craft, and handicrafts in tiny shops. Fiji has its government Handicraft Shop; dedicated handicraft markets in Nadi and Suva; handicraft stalls in markets throughout the country; hotel shops; Jacks, which has a factory, has large stores in Nadi, Sigatoka, and Suva, and runs shops in hotels; and Matenga's, where owners and employees experiment and teach in a shop/studio. Kiribati has a handicraft shop. In the Marshall Islands, Mary Lanwi has run managed handicraft sales since the 1960s; the Catholic sisters accept handicrafts in lieu of school tuition on the outer islands and sell the handicrafts in Majuro; and many shops sell crafts of various kinds. On Niue, Maihetoe Hekau runs a shop. In Samoa, handicrafts are sold in Aggie Grey's, the Wendts', and other shops and in the market. In Solomon Islands, crafts are sold through hotel shops, by King Solomon store, and at Betikama Seventh-day Adventist school. Vanuatu has several shops on the main road plus Connies' Art blong Yumi, which was first a studio and shop in Luganville, Santo and later branched to Port Vila (Regenvanu 1996:313). Port Vila's market has crafts, and people set up roadside stalls.

Some publications about handicrafts as objects of trade already exist. The Pacific Islands Forum, through its trade programme, has promoted island craft, including the publication of full-colour brochures (R. Austin nd, 1986, 1988a&b; AGPS 1980; Rolls 1991) so that people might see the crafts themselves. Mary Lanwi of the Marshall Islands is including aspects of her entrepreneurial work in a chapter about her life in a forthcoming book on Marshallese life and culture. More publications about production and trade can enhance school curricula by demonstrating employment. Art for art's sake is admirable, but in a region desperate for jobs and income, art provides a means.


**Festivals of Arts**

If we look back, Pacific Islanders have always had festivals of arts. Gatherings and rituals were occasions for showing off achievements in art. Traditional and contemporary arts include architecture, carving, costume, dance, drama, fabric making and dyeing, jewelry, needlework, painting, pottery, tattooing, weaving, and, most of all, exchange. With the initiation of nation-states came more formal celebrations, including the Festival of Pacific Arts, and records of those events. Supported by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (formerly the South Pacific Commission), the Festival of Pacific Arts is held every four years in a different country. Participants include all indigenous people of Oceania stretching from Hawai`i to Rapanui to New Zealand to Australia. Rich records of the festivities and their associated arts are found in eg *Visions of the Pacific* (Arnell & Wolk 1993) and *Taeao Fou I Mea Sina* (Ueligitone 1996).

The first Festival of Melanesian Arts was called Melanesia 2000. Organized by Jean-Marie Tjibaou, the festival celebrated Kanaky in all its forms and the subsequent book was meant to inform: *Kanaké: The Melanesian Way* (Tjibaou & Missotte 1978). I don't think anyone can remain unmoved when looking at that book. Other Melanesian festivals of arts have been held since; they offer opportunities for publications.

**Commercial Publishers**


These commercial publishers have invested their time and money to express the art of their countries. The publishers are assets to their countries as they are perpetuating art through books and books as art. We are all familiar with island politics and not using what our neighbours have produced. These are not politics that we can afford. The challenge is to use the expertise and enterprise available within the region. Even more than using their material, we should be celebrating their artistic endeavours.

Although we won’t run short of material from within, good material about the region has also been published nearby, eg *Luk Luk Gen! Look Again! Contemporary Art from Papua New Guinea* (Simons & Stevenson 1990), which includes biographies of artists as well as analysis of art, and *Tivaevae: Portraits of Cook Islands Quilting* (Rongokea 1992), which includes autobiographical information from the quilters. Ministries of education might negotiate collectively and individually with the publishers of these books to allow economical print runs so that they might be used in schools in the islands and in schools overseas with
significant Pacific Islander enrolments.

Issues in Education and Research

We have to deal with secrecy versus perpetuation. Some art is secret, associated with rituals. The smaller the secret, the more chance of the art dying. Although people want to protect their art, if art is not practised, then it dies. Much more research, writing, and publishing could be undertaken -- about forms, representation, materials, exchange, sales. Sharing the information is essential for its survival.

We do not have to stick to 'traditional' art forms. Art changes from red feathers to wool, pandanus to plastic, natural dyes to carbon paper for stencils. The tools to make art also change. The market changes. Missionaries brought mother hubbards, quilts, altar cloths, and pillow cases. World War II increased production of dolls and grass skirts. The increase in tourism has meant increases in the volume of souvenirs and little presents. These 'new' arts are part of Pacific Islands material and historic culture now and distinctive to each country. All of these changes can be analysed. Because all aspects of art change constantly, analysis needs to keep pace with the changes.

We need to increase our exposure to, encouragement of, and participation in, art.

School provides a fine venue for art instruction; art instruction also provides a fine means for making school relevant to Pacific life. The Marshall Islands elementary school curriculum provides for cultural instruction. On an outer island where I worked for a year, an older couple came to school every day. They had a wealth of knowledge, and they were conscientious individuals. They mined their own experiences to tell the children about history, legends and myths, and social etiquette and to teach them carving, sennit making, weaving, and other crafts. They wove their words and their actions together so that the crafts were living, functional parts of culture and education.

One might ask why bother to do that in school on an island of 150 people, where everyone knows each other, knows each other's stories, and participates in crafts every day. First of all, the children did not know all the stories, historical or make-believe. Second, they did not know all the crafts, because they were young and still learning. Third, that island, like every village in the Pacific, had different experts for different crafts. The children did not have experts for everything in their immediate family. Most important, the inclusion of cultural classes in school underlined the fact that Marshallese art and culture are as valuable as all the other subjects taught in school, and worth studying.

Publications as Art

Every generation should have the opportunity to make books. The Fiji Institute of Technology and technical schools in Papua New Guinea teach desktop publishing, graphic design, illustration, photography, and printing. Various agencies run occasional workshops on publishing. Daphne Brasell of Whitireia Community Polytechnic, Porirua City, Wellington offers publishing courses by distance. We must, however, start teaching publishing skills from the beginning of primary school. One way to encourage art is to include art publishing in the core curriculum of schools, whether in language, history, or arts classes. Students and teachers can assemble illustrations and writing about different kinds of art into rough books, even just tied or stapled together. If they have a stencil machine or a photocopier, they can make multiple copies for group study. If they have desktop computers and printers, they can typeset and layout their own publications. This kind of activity can lead to better curriculum development for generations to come because it teaches people how to put together books and gives them practice over many years. As Thaman (1993:81) pointed out, if teachers
participate in curriculum writing, the likelihood of their using the curriculum is higher. I add, if students and teachers participate in curriculum publishing, they are participating in conducting research and creating art; therefore, the likelihood of their using the books is higher.

I have meant this paper to be a celebration, albeit brief, of books that have been published about art throughout the Pacific Islands. Learned people have created many art publications; resources are plentiful. Ministries of education should take advantage of, and work with, what we have: local groups, institutions, and publishers to research, teach, and publish about art. Consultation and coordination are necessary. The challenge is to develop pedagogical tools and teacher training to use what is already available and produce-able at home. Likewise, local publishers should consult with ministries of education about how their publications might be included in the curricula; after all, the schools constitute the biggest market in the Pacific.

One way to support art education is to publish about art and to use the art publications that are available. I said at the beginning of my presentation that I enjoyed the opportunity to re-look at all of my art books, created by people throughout the Pacific Islands. I hope that one outcome of this conference is that all of us can support one of the Pacific's newest, but most enduring art forms: its publications about art.

References


Boulay, Roger. 1990. La Maison Kanak. Nouméa: Agence de Développement de la Culture Kanak, Parenthèses and ORSTOM.


