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The World is as Sharp as a Knife

Shallow play and deep play are 'about' the same kind of thing, but at different levels

Gambling

Shallow play is a game, a controlled parody of social situations. You lose, but don't really lose the important things (prestige, life)

Deep play (Kurtz) - gamble prestige - lose but don't really lose

Transformation: take risks, gamble, and lose apparently everything, but at next upper level, gaining. Binokadet - Skin dies on Ravens Cry, but transforms into Wealth Ever.

Myth is 'telling a story'

shallow - stories about Ravens and great symbol

transformed - " " arch-heroes

but still a story

Art is "drawing a likeness"

shallow - scenographic

deep - expressive - scenic

still a likeness

Duff, Red, Helen: Search for Individuality

1 - Arts of the Raven - intuitive stories of nature

Intuitive statements - Red (Hanna part)

Featured The Box - led to CE, TP studies

"Duff - Innovations leading to Education

- 4/10/75

- The Box - led to CE, TP studies



# The World is as Sharp as a Knife

## Meanings in Haida Art

### 1. Sample chosen

a) The pieces

b) I attribute all to Edenshaw

- at any rate, within style defined by Holm & Boas

- I believe this study had to await clearer definition of styles.

I do not suggest Edenshaw originated it, but was its supreme artist.

### 2. The Search for Meaning in Haida Art

a) Boas, Emmons, Hucombe, etc : Scam and crest symbol  
What does it represent? (ie what crest)  
role in culture

Style was merely decorative (quote Boas, re Holm)  
Impasse at The Box

b) Holm : Description of Form

- devised vocabulary, key-word analysis, described all features  
- but to him, style was merely space filling, decorative, not symbolic of anything.

c) Duff, Reid, Holm : Search for Individual Styles

i - Acts of the Raven Show - intuitive choice of indiv. artists

- Intuitive statements - Reid (Hanna fa?)

Featured The Box Led to CE, TP studies

ii Duff - Innovations leading to Edenshaw

- chests

- The Box - red on black (hence the sample above)



a) Impasse - style overshadows iconography, but we don't know what it means.

- Holm's phrasing
- just as it is getting interesting, we run out of things to say.

### 3. New Concepts

- structural symbolism (Greenberg)
- cultural cognitive maps (Fiedler)
- structure of art (Lionel) also nature-culture
- structure of art, music, myth, etc (L-S)
- Lenz - discourse-presentationist.

Hypothesis: there are meanings implicit in the style at least as important as those explicit in iconography.



Holm

The critical point in my argument is saying that the 'decorative' (Holm) features have meaning. I will have to dwell on what kinds of meaning in my Conclusions.

Raven has square ears to help fill space

Bill's explanation does not explain:

origin of emergent shapes "conventionalized", but why?  
or the precision or the need for a system if it is just decoration

He found a system "design system" p 19

"the rules of design that govern parenting..." p 17

"The principles that govern two-dimensional design..." p 4

"system of principles" (Preface)

could find no informant who knew system

Kwak so diff it or could not use same check list

Systems are <sup>built</sup> based on premises; it should be possible to deduce what those premises are

described a forgotten system -  
we should be able to deduce its underlying premises.

Both levels are "about" the same general topics but the iconographic message is a single utterance. The rules of grammar, premises of meaning, and manner of construction are implicit in the style.

The committee structure analogy



## The Core of it.

The deeper meanings are the premises and values implicitly expressed in the "style" and structure. Just because they are implicit does not make them less real or less conscious. The iconography says "This is one of the things I do" (and that's all). The style says "These are the ways we do such things". The message of the iconography is explicit, specific, and static. The implied messages of the style are implicit, generalized, and dynamic (because the style is read discursively, which allows dynamic patterns to form in the minds).

The iconography represents the immediate agenda (to depict Raven as a crest). The style represents the rules of procedure. It is not enough to do the immediate job, it must be done in the proper way. The <sup>descriptions</sup> rules and conventions of the style are descriptions of characteristics of the "proper way". If these are adequately described, it should be possible to infer what the underlying premises are. And the statement of the underlying premises constitutes the "deeper meanings" of the art.

Both levels are "about" the same general topic. But the iconographic message is a single utterance. The rules of grammar, premises of meaning, and canons of aesthetics are implicit in the style.

The committee structure analogy.



But of course the medium, at both iconographic and expressive levels, is drawing, and it can "mean" only what drawings can mean. It can say "this is how things do look" and it can idealize and say "this is how things should look".

With regard to behavior, it can say "this is how things uniformly behave", or (since it strives for beauty) "this is how all things should behave".

(a) being interesting. (b) designs staying up)

With regard to the shape of things, it can say "this is the shape it is", or "this is the shape it should be". By making things the shape they should be, the artist symbolically attempts to ensure they stay that shape.



## Ethos

The normal condition is not one of stasis but of change. That is why no two designs are identical, nor try to be.

There is no steady state, there is only change. Therefore the problem is one of always mediating contending forces, always seeking new solutions, knowing how to meet new situations. There is no great merit in yesterday's solution (design), for today is a different day. There is no great merit in tying down certain dimensions (box size & shape) because it is just one of myriad conditions in flux.

But if the box is what I think it is he was applying the system to the analysis of a specific situation. This is not working, but

It is not a map, not working in the usual sense, because it does not refer to specific situations, but categorized situations.



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To what degree was his art becoming a form of "writing"?

- a) it was happening in the expressive mode. (The dismemberment of the ideography was to force the eye to go at the design discursively, and concentrate on the expression.
- b) it was made a discursive exercise
- c) units were standardized and reduced to a small lexicon
- d) there was no referent <sup>to</sup> speech, and therefore none to specific situations
- e) so it is a generalized, non-specific lexicon like music  
"this is the way things act" (not any or specific thing)
- f) it is discursive, but not continuous (no one continuous melodic line like music)
- g) partly, the "lexicon" is songs  
" " " " songs (symbols like salmon-trout)  
but both are generalized, not specific

But if The Boy is what I think it is, he was applying the system to the analysis of a specific situation. This is not writing, but . . .

It is not a map, not writing, in the usual sense, because it does not refer to specific situations, but categorized situations



Contour  
monography

Was the drawing 'monography' or expression

In small part, he was drawing known with known support  
with known other prior purpose was to express a proper  
To define the image. But predominantly, he was drawing  
action, describe a proper path, or create a proper shape.  
He shapes the center (words, spirit also etc) could be  
used, more or less ambiguously, to depict "paths" and  
"points", but there is a little of Nature in them.  
The lines, for one thing, were formless, and  
worked on arguments, but made continuous grades.  
Arguments and continuance of the same lines focusing on  
the arguments, each has a relationship of mark to others

The word, reduced to essential, as  
contour space. As is the world of man  
a contour space. How clear they are in shape!  
The world as the shape of space, like a bubble on the  
water



## Image of Reality as an element of Iconography

An implicit element in reading iconography is some vision of the thing in nature. Raven's wing calls to mind a real wing, with its internal forces and this enters into the mental blend.

FACT IS THEY HAVE BEEN STRUCTURED Mar 23

What does this painting "mean"? What does this class "mean"? On the surface it is a lecture on a subject - that is its manifest meaning. What are its concomitant meanings? These are implicit in the 'style' and 'structure' which are observable.

It reveals our system of education

It reveals our concept of time & learning

It reveals our values

In any patterned activity the <sup>unconscious</sup> implicit meanings are present in every specific action

- Tyhurst - my specific behavior reveals my underlying

unconscious premises

- Committee - structure and rules of order imply goarances of democracy, etc

- Lecture - structure implies our concept of time, education

The form is the best available compromise between the aim at the moment and ~~the~~ all the other aims of the culture

Hence it has some imprint of all relevant values of the culture. It takes a mighty perceptive vision to see it.



"The premises that never get stated"

It is those values which have been structured - in  
to the style; used as meaningful elements of structure  
(like committees). Sometimes it is inefficient  
(a camel as a horse designed by a committee).  
haven't re lazy iconography

FACT IS: THEY HAVE BEEN STRUCTURED IN  
can't read them if they aren't really there  
so, first, find structural regularities and describe them  
then, infer their meanings

I couldn't have learned this if it wasn't really in Edinshaw's  
art

I am freeing myself from another of my unconscious  
premises: that I have to control everything, structure  
every situation so that it won't hurt me. I have even  
been trying to control the ways of knowing things  
I haven't been relaxed enough about letting in new  
ways of thought, and letting feeling play its part.  
Out of fear, I have stifled my capacity for joy -  
until now

There are more things in this world, Horatio, than  
are dreamed of in your philosophy.

My search for implied meanings in art is symbolic  
of my search for other ways of understanding myself  
and my world. My enemy is fear, fear of feeling,  
fear of new ways of understanding things. The  
"loosening up" has released floods of long pent hunches  
and also wells of feeling (I was afraid that it was  
all sorrow, but it is also joy).



## Alphabet

The expressive alphabet is very small

Everything is rendered in this form

### Partial elements

1. formline segment (iconographic) PS
2. formline U PS
3. formline ovoid PS

### Shape elements

ovoid (true line around inner ovoid)

inner ovoid (solid)

eye

split - U

### Design segments

salmon trout head

profile face

extraneous face

eye face

hand

foot

face

eye

### Punctuation

relief slits

negative 'circle' relief

S L U line fillers

○ line space-relevers

} true line fillers



## Steps in making design expressive

A. With the iconography (starting not with nature's reality, but culture's pictographs) <sup>no props, no ground</sup>

outline the  
iconography

1. Distort - to emphasize parts rather than whole
2. Simplify -
  - only frontal or profile
  - only essential parts
3. Rearrange - Configurative → distributive <sup>dissect</sup> decay of the silhouette
4. Make "rhetoric" parts as standardized and close to expressive as possible (leg, foot, beak)
5. Render parts as ambiguous 'expressive' elements

In general, break down the iconography to destroy resemblance to nature, even destroy natural silhouette (image), make the reading of it a discursive exercise, and a very ambiguous one. Leave only enough iconographic elements to reveal a vestige of nature, and say all the rest in cultural forms.

B. With the expressive mode (starting with the ability to make lines that convey expression, and new shapes that can have new meanings)

1. Create 'formline' to segment the outline, segment the parts
2. Make all lines move (behave) in imposed, controlled ways
3. Subdue the animal by restructuring it on the field. The field becomes one of the jaws of the vise, the artist the other
4. Reduce the infinite shapes of nature to a small number of shape controlled by man. Control the actions of things and the shape of things
  - create elements that can stand for natural things (U's) but are not 'from nature', and can stand for other things as well.
5. Express nature in man's terms. Nature is in subordination  
Nature is subordinated to man

Not that man really subdues nature, but that <sup>Man</sup> man expresses the totemic relationships in a new way. It is not just built on <sup>animal</sup> nature-man homology. It shows how man acts, how the differences between men



can be expressed, in a different way, a more expressive way.

(There must be a new dichotomy of we - they in the expressive design. What is it?)

frontal - profile (i.e. ovoid - v) ?

black - red (i.e. we - they?)

or is it simply a dichotomy, given the 3-way structure of Harder society?



Geertz says cultural forms are texts

Edwards was not just depicting Haida life, he was defining it. Drawing a "cognitive map" of the Haida universe was an act that helped to shape the Haida universe.