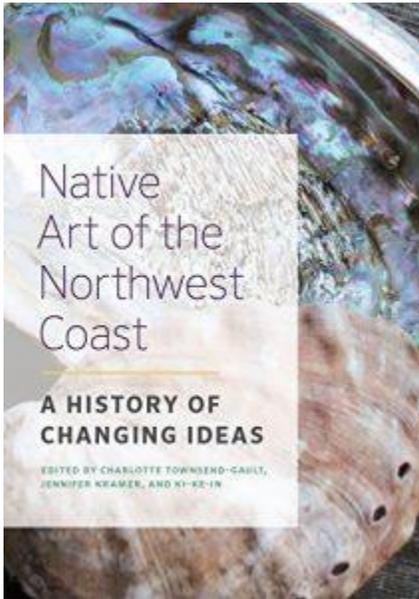


## 2014 Melva J. Dwyer Award Winner

### *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas*



The Melva J. Dwyer Award committee received 11 nominations. Each publication presented such uniquely valuable contributions to Canadian art, design, architecture and visual culture studies that it made for a challenging evaluation process. Despite this, there was unified consensus that one title stood out as truly representing an “exceptional reference or research tool relating to Canadian art and architecture” and the jury unanimously chose to confer the 2014 Melva J. Dwyer Award to:

*Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas*, edited by Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Jennifer Kramer, and Ki-ke-in [kih-keh-in], and published by the University of British Columbia Press, 2013.

Jurors were riveted by the integrity and authenticity of the thirty essays included in this anthology, the rigorous indexing, the awe-inspiring breadth and scope of the content and, most compellingly, how the overall thematic structure of the work represents a holistic Indigenous worldview.

This is not a standard “reference” publication emanating from the European enlightenment tradition. *Native Art of the Northwest Coast* subtly questions modes of organization grounded in either chronological or subject-based ordering, by employing a conceptual structure rooted in Indigenous narrative practice. Perhaps most indicative of this impulse is the inclusion of an introductory chapter by Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas who presents a Haida manga depiction of Indigenous cosmology and consciousness.

Each ensuing chapter features expository essays that are used to contextualize the numerous historical transcripts transcribed in each section. These testimonials are expansive in scope, giving voice to a diverse array of observers and participants, both Native and non-Native, including elders, artists, activists, anthropologists, curators, art historians, legal experts, among many others. Presenting this narrative frame around primary source material creates a dialogic authorial voice that guides readers through the challenging work of confronting Western European preconceptions about art, culture and history. For, above all, the central thread running through each chapter is a plea to those of us looking at Northwest Coast art to move beyond a one-dimensional viewing experience and, instead, begin listening to the story of the artwork. In short, instead of just using your eyes, use your ears.

*Native Art of the Northwest Coast* is a product of over 10 years of research and offers a comprehensive review of 250 years of historical literature. The essays featured in this 1,000 page publication are all-encompassing covering topics such as the evolution of the Northwest Coast art market, the deployment of Native art for Canadian nationalist purposes, the influence of First Nation’s culture on surrealist thinking, and the recent explosion of Indigenous voices in new media production. An exhaustive index not only supports expected access and searchability features, but is a work of art in its own right, as it provides the ethical framework for the entirety of the thirty essays. The predominance of indexed entries that offer conceptually expressive themes—such as Access, Agency, Collaboration, Culture, Dance, Objects, Ownership, Power, to name a few—might seem unexpectedly poetic for a reference tome, but are, in fact, critical for providing the Indigenous values that tangibly bind together the diversity of material presented in the essays.

The subtitle “A history of changing ideas,” is significant as well: in many First Nations’ cultures foundational stories are not mythic narratives frozen in some chronologically distant past, but are, in fact, “animate”; stories change over time by revealing new essential truths and meanings as they are told and re-told in different cultural or historical contexts. This phenomenological approach is the embodiment of an oral cultural conceptualization of the world; a stance rooted in a knowledgebase that emanates from the intersection of empirical observation, fact, metaphor, intuition, conceptual thinking and, above all, is only achieved through dialogue and consensus among interlocutors.

In this light, *Native Art of the Northwest Coast* truly embodies a post-colonial voice, by taking the genre of “reference” and re-framing it through the lens of Indigenous “ways of knowing.” It is a fitting tribute to this award winning title that the theme of the 42nd ARLIS/NA conference is “Art+Politics.”

Accepting the award was:

- Mr. Paul Chaat Smith of the Comanche First Nation. He is an associate curator from the National Museum of the American Indian and was a founding editor of the American Indian Movement’s Treaty Council News. In addition to the essay he wrote for *Native Art of the Northwest Coast*, he has coauthored the seminal text *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: New Press, 1996) and is author of *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
- D. Vanessa Kam, Acting Head Librarian, Music + Art + Architecture Library at the University of British Columbia.

Presented on Saturday 3 May 2014 at the ARLIS/NA 42nd annual conference Convocation at The Library of Congress (Thomas Jefferson Building).

Presented by: Daniel Payne, Canadian Member-at-Large (2012–14); Head, Instructional Services, Dorothy H. Hoover Library, OCAD University

The 2014 jurors included Claire Parker, Visual Resources Librarian, Western University; Sylvia Roberts, Liaison Librarian for Communication & Contemporary Arts Simon Fraser University; Rebecca Young, University Librarian, NSCAD University.

## 2014 Melva J. Dwyer Award Nominees | Titres nommés

- [\*Arthur Erickson: An Architect's Life\*](#)  
 Author: David Stouck  
 Publisher: Douglas & McIntyre
- [\*Artists, Architects & Artisans: Canadian Art 1890–1918\*](#)  
 Authors: Charles Hill, Andrea Kunard, Laurier Lecroix, Geoffrey Simmins, Rosiland Pepall, Christine Boyanoski, Bruce Russell  
 Publisher: The National Gallery of Canada
- [\*Canadian Online Art Books\*](#) (series, launched November 2013)  
 Publisher: Art Canada Institute
- [\*First Peoples of Canada: Masterworks from the Canadian Museum of Civilization\*](#)  
 Authors: Jean-Luc Pilon, Nicholette Prince  
 Publisher: University of Toronto Press
- [\*John C. Parkin, Archives, and Photography\*](#)  
 Editors: Linda Fraser, Michael McMordie, Geoffrey Simmins  
 Publisher: University of Calgary Press
- [\*Marion Nicoll: Science and Alchemy\*](#)  
 Editors: Ann Davis, Elizabeth Herbert, Jennifer Salahub, Christine Sowiak  
 Publisher: University of Calgary Press
- [\*The Official Picture: The National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division and the Image of Canada, 1941–1971\*](#)  
 Author: Carol Payne  
 Publisher: McGill-Queen's University Press
- [\*On Architecture: Melvin Charney, a Critical Anthology\*](#)  
 Editor: Louis Martin  
 Publisher: McGill-Queen's University Press
- [\*Paul-Emile Borduas: A Critical Biography\*](#)  
 Author: Francois-Marc Gagnon, trans. Peter Feldstein  
 Publisher: McGill-Queen's University Press
- [\*The Video Art of Sylvia Safdie\*](#)  
 Author: Eric Lewis  
 Publisher: McGill-Queen's University Press