but they are still accessible to the neophyte student of social archaeology. Articles range the spectrum from impressionistic to analytical, but they are all personal narratives of real world struggles to find a place for all perspectives.


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Innovations in art appear in increments with each generation developing upon, or working in reaction to, the traditions set by their forebears. In *The Carver and the Artist: Māori Art in the Twentieth Century*, author, curator and art historian Damian Skinner highlights what he sees to be the major increments of change in Māori art in the 20th century, paying particular attention to the period between 1920 and 1980. Referring to the *whare whakairo* ‘carved house’ as the customary foundation for Māori art in the early 20th century, the publication progressively charts the transformation of Māori art from being a *tapu* ‘sacred or guarded’ and communal endeavour to the contemporary proliferation and individualisation of Māori forms of artistic expression.

Skinner sets up his investigation by creating a distinction between what he defines as the character of the “Carver” and the “Artist”. *Tohunga whakairo* ‘master carver’ Tuti (Tony) Tukaokao is cast as the character of the “Carver”. Skinner outlines how Tukaokao, being a “traditional” Māori carver, had to conform to certain cultural conventions and aesthetic expectations of the *iwi* ‘people’ and the social values of his time. Skinner portrays Tukaokao’s artistic practice in stark contrast to the character of the “Artist”, represented by Arnold Manaaki Wilson, who was trained in Pākehā academic art institutions and as such was free to explore his own forms of representation and artistic expression.

The author does a highly commendable job at extrapolating many, but not all, of the key issues in Māori art during the 20th century. Beginning with the Māori renaissance or “revival” instigated by that visionary Māori leader the late Sir Apirana Ngata at The Rotorua School of Māori Arts and Crafts in the early 1920s, Skinner examines in depth the creation of the Ngata template and its impact on Māori art in the 20th century. The Ngata template, being the style of carving and weaving promoted by the Rotorua School, was based primarily on the East Coast Te Rawheoro and Ngāti Tarawhai schools of carving. Skinner identifies the rejection of the Ngata template and the introduction of modernist concepts as one of the key issues for Māori artists of the 1950s through the 1970s. The bulk of Skinner’s investigation is based primarily around this period.

The book ends with an exposé on *Te Ihenga*, a carved meeting house created by the master of contemporary *whakairo* ‘carving’ Lyonel Grant, and moves on to what Skinner terms as the birth of “Contemporary Māori Art”. Skinner characterises
this era by its politically charged content concerning important social issues of the time—as opposed to the preoccupation with artistic conventions which characterised the artists of the modernist period.

Through his thorough investigations and personally conducted interviews, Skinner has brought to light many interesting and insightful comments about Māori art in the 20th century, and in doing so he presents the voices and opinions of many of the major commentators on Māori arts throughout the century.

However, for a publication entitled Māori Art in the Twentieth Century, there were some obvious gaps in the research, such as a thorough investigation into the mana wahine ‘(Māori) womens art’ movement of the 1970s and 1980s, and there is almost no mention of the major players and issues in Māori art during the 1990s. Although Skinner does frame the publication predominantly as an exploration of Māori art through carving, I felt another obvious omission was any mention of two of Māoridom’s most highly regarded contemporary carvers, Todd Couper and Roi Toia. I would have enjoyed a small commentary on Skinner’s thoughts about their interactions with First Nation indigenous carvers from the Northwest Coast of Canada, and the international prestige and recognition which Māori carving has achieved since the groundbreaking Te Māori exhibition of the 1980s.

At times I struggled with some of the terms Skinner used to define the major periods of change and, since I found myself disagreeing with some of his conclusions, I felt that the book needed to be framed as a discussion document and not, as the bookshops seem to portray it, the authoritative text on Māori art in the 20th century.

The dilemma, in my view, is that some of Skinner’s statements are yet to be fully debated and proven legitimate. To wit, Skinner states: “There is nothing traditional about the whare whakairo in the twentieth century...” (p. 25) and, with respect to the group of artists that Skinner refers to as the “Māori Modernists”, he states: “These artists were Modernists first, and Māori artists second” (p. 115).

Although Skinner elaborates on such statements to put them in context for the reader, I felt that blanket statements of this nature should just not be made, and definitely should not be applied to an entire group of practitioners—many of whom I am sure would disagree with his interpretation. Such generalised assertions really should be left up to the individual artist to articulate and not enforced upon them by commentators.

I also found his use of the term “Māoritanga” to define the period of Māori art during the Ngata era (1900-1950) problematic. For a Māori language speaker this term seriously compromised the readability of the book as I constantly had to remember that Skinner was not using it in the sense that Māori language speakers use it. Māoritanga, being generally understood as a ‘Māori way of life’, is embodied in the everyday interactions of Māori people today. Skinner’s use of this term to define a historical period evoked in my mind the old colonial adage that true or authentic Māori culture is something from the past. While I know this was not Skinner’s intention, it still had these connotations. I believe that the author could have simply used the more commonly accepted term, “Ngata template”.

While at certain points throughout the book I felt that Skinner may have lacked some of the cultural sensitivities, or perhaps understanding, which other Pākehā commentators like Michael King and Roger Neich have demonstrated in their writings
on Māori subjects, Skinner has contributed an exceedingly insightful and substantial body of research to this area of study. It is good to see well researched and thought provoking books on Māori art being published and, although I disagreed with some of his definitions and conclusions, such texts provide other academics and amateur enthusiasts with intellectual food for thought to respond to in their future essays and publications. I hope that Skinner continues to publish work on the subject of Māori art. However, in writing such works my question to him is: Can he make the distinction between art historian and art critic?