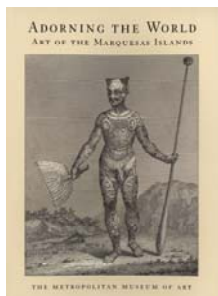


Adorning the World: Art of the Marquesas Islands / Eric Kjellgren and Carol S. Ivory.--New York, NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, June 2005,--140 p.: ill.--ISBN 0-300-10712-9 (pa., alk. paper): \$19.95 (pa.).



This catalog is published in conjunction with the exhibition held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (May 10, 2005 - January 16, 2006). In their substantive essays, authors Eric Kjellgren (Evelyn A. J. Hall and John A. Friede Associate Curator of Oceanic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) and Carol S. Ivory (professor and chair of the Department of Fine Arts at Washington State University), cover the history of the Marquesas from the first known contact in 1595 by Spanish explorers to the present day. The exhibition is the first of its kind to bring together and honor such a collection of Marquesan art from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most of the objects in the exhibit were made before the mid-nineteenth century, prior to the significant changes that occurred in the Marquesan culture with increased western contact and conversion to Catholicism after the French annexation in 1842. Very few of these artifacts can be found in the Marquesas Islands today, and in fact, all the pieces in the exhibition have come from collections outside the Marquesas.

The Marquesas consist of six main inhabited islands just south of the equator and 800 miles north of Tahiti. They were formed from extinct volcanoes and have no coastal plains or coral reefs surrounding the islands unlike the rest of the Polynesian Islands. They look dramatically different and inspired highly decorative art forms with the main artistic expression being sculpture, decorative art and body adornment, particularly tattooing. The catalog includes a statement from the Marquesan people in which deep gratitude is expressed for the recognition this exhibition has provided. A map of the Marquesas Islands with an inset shows the remoteness of the archipelago in relation to the rest of the world.

The first most comprehensive survey of Marquesan art was by German physician Karl von den Steinen (1855-1929). Many early writers and artists visited the Marquesas and found inspiration: Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jack London, and Paul Gauguin. Significant cultural changes in the nineteenth century resulted in decreased art production for traditional use. The tourist trade gave art forms some economic support from the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. It was the Marquesan style that became popularized over the twentieth century and used in Polynesian themed restaurants all over the world. But, it was not until the 1970s that there was serious revitalization in the arts through research, education and arts festivals.

The catalog includes seventy-eight color reproductions of the objects themselves with substantial explanatory notes on each piece. Most of the objects in the exhibit are Marquesan works, with the exception of a number of works on paper that were created by early visitors and explorers to the islands. These works depict excellent examples of body adornment of that time period that in fact show how some of the artifacts in the exhibit were used. These visual documents also show the high level of body decoration and tattoo practiced by the Marquesans.

The authors incorporate Marquesan terms in their essays and documentation and have provided a glossary. The references-cited section and extensive footnotes provide a well documented publication. An index is included, and the catalog illustrations are plentiful, with very clear reproduction quality. This publication is highly recommended for all art library collections both public and academic especially those with Oceanic art collections. The information presented is unique and not found easily in other publications on Marquesan or Polynesian art. It is scholarly in nature and suitable for students and scholars of Oceanic art, although it is also totally accessible to non-academics and travelers. Since relatively little has been written on Marquesan art, this title fills a gap.

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