F. Allan Hanson and Louise Hanson, eds., ***Art and Identity in Oceania.*** Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990. Pp. viii, 315, b/w & color illus., bibliography. US$39 cloth.

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In some respects the title of this handsomely produced and stimulating volume 'is misleading. Only two essays in the collection address directly the relationship between art and identity, one by Hirini Mead on the New Zealand Maori, the other by Vincent Megaw on the Australian Aborigines. Issues concerning the individual identity of artists are implicit in a number of the papers, and the role that various art forms play in perpetuating earlier cultural formations is brought out in others. But on the whole, the identity part of the art and identity equation is underdeveloped.

In the introduction, the editors provide a rationale for the title, suggesting the symposium that spawned the volume may have been more interesting along these lines than the book. They inform us that "the self-conscious expression of identity in art was 'in the air' more than any other topic at the symposium," and that a "degree of resentment was expressed by some Pacific islanders present that scholars of non-Pacific heritage living in Europe or North America would presume to identify the meanings and importance of art in Pacific cultures" (pp. 3-4). If the Hansons had not included such statements, readers would be unaware of their significance, for they are not reflected in the remainder of the chapters, with the partial exception of Mead's personal, eloquent, and moving account of the meaning of Maori art to his own sense of identity. I make this point to warn prospective readers that if they are primarily interested in issues of cultural identity they may find the volume disappointing.

Like most volumes that derive from symposia, the chapters are somewhat

uneven in coverage and quality. The impression I received from reading through the volume was more on the order of a sequence of papers in a high-quality journal than reading a book with a coherent theme. However, readers who approach it with a healthy curiosity about the state of the arts in Oceania today may nevertheless find the volume stimulating. Most of the essays are well conceived and well written, and the overall effect can be likened to viewing a set of vivid snapshots (an effect that is enhanced by an excellent assortment of high-quality illustrations and photographs). One gains a good sense of contemporary approaches to Pacific art within the academic community, along with a few hints of issues that concern Pacific Islanders.

Most chapters focus on art forms that reflect important aspects of the cultures in which they are produced. Dirk Smidt, for example, presents a functional-interpretive analysis of carved one-legged figures ***(tambaran)*** among the Kominimung, in the Middle Ramu River area of Papua New Guinea. The figures represent mythical ancestors who play an important role in male initiation and marriage ceremonies. Smidt provides a detailed account of the production of such figures, a contextualized description of the role they play in male initiation rites, and an iconographic analysis of the figures and motifs associated with them.

Tobias Schneebaum and Deborah Waite both examine the ceremonial significance of carved figures. Schneebaum describes carvings on a variety of artifacts in Asmat, Irian Jaya, named for recently dead relatives, which act as constant reminders to the living that all deaths must be avenged. Waite focuses her attention on the ***mon*** canoes in the western Solomons. Following a detailed description of canoe carvings, she explores the ritual contexts associated with canoes and fishing, and the ways in which symbolic representations reflect ritual concerns. The carvings, she suggests, "may have evoked the presence of spirits whose protection and guarantee of efficacy was sought through ritual offerings and chants" (p. 59). The metaphoric significance of ancestors, and the role played by artistic productions in ritual performances, are pervasive themes throughout the volume.

A subset of the chapters concerns the problematic origins of certain forms of artistic production. John McKesson explores the origin of New Caledonian masks, which are anomalous objects within the artistic array. Most other art forms are two-dimensional, centered on the decoration of men's houses, and associated with the ancestor cult. Masks are three-dimensional, are not used as decorations in men's houses, and are not associated with the ancestors. They are, however, linked by myths to gods and spirits. McKesson concludes that a foreign origin would account for the enigma and suggests Vanuatu as a likely possibility.

William Davenport deals with the figurative sculptures of Santa Cruz

Island, most of which were destroyed in the course of British colonial pacification and conversion to Christianity. Once centerpieces of ritual activity, most surviving pieces now are in museum collections around the world. After weighing the possibility of indigenous development against diffusion from the eastern Solomon Islands, Davenport concludes that Santa Cruz figurative sculpture was most likely borrowed from the vicinity of Santa Ana and Santa Catalina islands.

Masked Tamate figures of Vanikoro are the objects of Roger Rose's investigation. Tamate dancers most frequently perform at maturation rites, representing characters from a mythical cycle. The chapter includes detailed descriptions of manufacture from a Tamate costume maker, but the main problematic of the essay concerns when and from where the Tamate was introduced to Vanikoro. Rose presents evidence to support a southern origin, possibly from the Torres and Banks groups, or northern Vanuatu.

Another cluster of chapters explores the contexts of artistic production and presentation, including changes over time. In a particularly provocative article, Philip Lewis explores New Guinea art in three different contexts: tourist settings, museums, and ongoing social contexts. Contrary to common perceptions, he did not find tourist productions to be inevitably of inferior quality to items produced for ritual performances. Following Graburn, he questions the overemphasis that has been placed on "traditional" art forms, pointing out that our ideas concerning what is "traditional" change, and that yesterday's junk art may become tomorrow's valuables. We should look beyond the forms to the multiple contexts of production, use, and meanings in which the newer arts are made. National and local museums, he suggests, imbue selected art forms with social value and provide models to artists and craftsmen; they might, therefore, play a role in stimulating, and setting standards for, contemporary arts.

Roger Neich discusses historical innovations in New Zealand Maori figurative painting, which is a case in point, insofar as these particular forms, which supplemented or replaced carvings in meetinghouses, have been downgraded and are not represented in museums or art galleries. Whereas "traditional" carvings in meetinghouses expressed the identity of the group through representations of ancestral figures, after the 1870s the expression of group identity was based more on recent history, particularly in relation to Pakeha Europeans. Neich informs us that whereas carving and tattooing were the two Maori art forms most bound by the laws of tabu, thus stabilizing conventionalized forms, painting was not so restricted. Painters required no special spiritual initiation and apprenticeship. As a result, untrained individuals could practice figurative painting relatively free from the rules of tabu, and figurative painting was more capable of responding to new social and historical conditions.

Barry Craig and Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk spotlight contexts of artistic production that are overlooked ordinarily. Craig documents relic and trophy arrays among the Mountain-Ok in central New Guinea. Arrays consist of ancestral relics along with the bones and skulls of various wild animals and jawbones of domestic pigs. These are displayed, more or less symmetrically, on the walls of men's cult houses, where rituals are performed aimed at ensuring the fertility of taro and domestic pigs, success in hunting and warfare, and good health for community members. Changes in the economy have disconnected major sectors of the population from traditional pursuits, however, with the resulting disintegration of relic and trophy arrays, and the occasional inclusion of cassette radios, suitcases full of foreign goods, and empty meat and fish cans appearing as substitutions for relics of the past.

Teilhet-Fisk presents a fascinating account of Tongan grave art, which she effectively relates to changes in social organization. As she puts it, "Grave art transgresses the Tongan system of rank, balances out the inequitable class system, and announces the emergence of a rising middle class among commoners" (p. 223). The incorporation of plastic flowers and of decorations cut from aluminum cans with petals made from multicolored bits of crepe paper, cloth, and candy wrappers is an excellent example of Lévi-Strauss's ***bricolage*** in artistic production. Teilhet-Fisk's analysis is exemplary insofar as she relates the production of grave art to other aspects of social life in a compelling manner. One can see the basis here for a comparative study that could be exceptionally revealing.

Stephanie Reynolds's essay on gender constraints in Tongan dance is less satisfying. This is the only chapter focusing on a performing art, and its inclusion adds considerably to the ad hoc impression the volume conveys. Reynolds's main point is that women's dances and dancing styles have been more conservative as a result of greater cultural constraints on women's actions, which are reflected in dance movements. The paper stands as a mere footnote to the writings of Adrienne Kaeppler, upon whose work the author draws heavily.

Several other papers appear to have been included because the authors were at the symposium rather than because their essays contributed to any central themes. Chapters on salvage art history among the Sulka of Wide Bay, East New Britain, by George Corbin; on the prehistoric sequence of Nendö Island, Santa Cruz, by Lawrence Foanaota; and an interesting historical account of the search for Tasmanian bark art by Edward Ruhe fall into this category.

Three other chapters are of a more general nature. The Hansons provide an account of what has been written about New Zealand Maori art over the years. They provide a quantitative and qualitative analysis of changing topics of concern, aesthetic judgments, and symbolic interpretations of Maori art

as reflected in the published literature. Philip Dark presents a wide-ranging, rather rambling account of the state of the arts in Oceania today Drawing upon his own travels as well as on published sources and museum collections, he discusses various ways in which artistic activities maintain a continuing link with the past, as well as innovations, borrowings, and the development of a pan-Pacific style. More general still is a chapter by Eric Schwimmer on the anthropology of the ritual arts. Perhaps it was the inclusion of this chapter, immediately following the editors' introduction, that led to my disappointment with the remainder of the volume. Schwimmer explores the nature of aesthetic discourse within anthropology and raises a number of key issues associated with iconographic interpretation. I found the essay exciting and approached subsequent chapters with the expectation that these issues would be addressed. If they were, it was only obliquely. Maybe what we need now is a symposium in which the issues Schwimmer raises are addressed directly by artists, aestheticians, anthropologists, and art historians. This would take us beyond mere description and functional analyses, and would aim to "lay bare the processes of poiesis" as they operate among artists (p. 12). It might also provide a basis for generating insights into the message content of whole performances, including redundancies, ambiguities, and contradictions conveyed in multiple channels.

The final two chapters are the only ones addressing issues of cultural identity, consciously conceived. J. V. S. Megaw raises issues concerning who has the power to define aesthetic quality and hence to determine the value of artistic productions. He points out that monetary yardsticks for Australian Aborigine art have been based on the medium rather than the message. Whereas technique and style are privileged among art critics from cosmopolitan urban cultures, it is the content of artistic productions that primarily concerns Third and Fourth World artists. Aborigine art often represents links between specific localities, and the life that inhabits those places, with the Dreamtime and thus lies at the root of Aboriginal claims to the land. "It is clear," Megaw writes, "that for Aboriginals, who claim an affinity with the harsh land of Australia and its living creatures, many of the images they create reflect their sense of a separate identity" (p. 290).

But it is the chapter by Hirini (Sydney) Moko Mead on tribal art as symbols of identity among the New Zealand Maori that brings us to the heart of the issue. He points out that only a few persons who take part in conferences on Oceanic art are associated with it for reasons of cultural heritage. Ultimately, he asserts, it is at the local level, in New Zealand at the level of the ***hapu,*** or subtribe, that art and identity coalesce. He eloquently describes the significance of Maori meetinghouses, and the artworks that adorn them, for personal identity. Commenting on his own experience he

states, "The sub-tribe group, our relatives, the ***marae,*** the ancestral mountain, the rivers, the carved house, and all of the artwork of the group, including family heirlooms, define us as persons. I cannot be understood as a mere individual who is cut adrift from my cultural roots. The roots help me to stand like a tree" (p. 280). That is what identity is all about. Perhaps that is what art in Oceania is all about. But we will have to await more representations by Pacific Islanders like Mead, who can craft meanings in words we understand as well as in the visual arts, before we can know for sure.