

Roberta Colombo Dougoud et Lorin Wüscher ont coordonné ce catalogue pour en faire une “mise en lumière de l’art kanak ... [et] une forme de restitution symbolique” (13), éclairant simultanément l’œuvre de Marguerite Lobsiger-Dellenbach. Ce fut aussi la double visée de l’exposition tenue au MEG du 29 février 2008 au 4 janvier 2009, puis au Musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie de Nouméa (27 mars – 4 octobre 2010) dans une configuration enrichie de la collection locale de bambous gravés anciens et d’œuvres d’artistes kanak contemporains leur faisant écho : Paula Gony Boi, Yvette Bouquet, Kofié Lopez Itrema et Stéphanie Wamytan. Avec sa mise en page sobre et imaginative, sa belle iconographie présentant un nombre inégalé d’images gravées, ses reproductions photographiques impeccables, ses textes accessibles présentant divers aspects des bambous gravés kanak hier et aujourd’hui, ce catalogue est désormais une des meilleures introductions à cette forme d’expression du monde kanak.

Denis Monnerie

Colombo Dougoud, Roberta, and Barbara Müller (eds.): *Dream Traces. Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings*. Genève: Musée d’Ethnographie de Genève, 2010. 175 pp., ph. ISBN 978-2-88474-198-9. Price: sfr 39.00

This splendid book, lavishly and generously illustrated with stunning images of bark paintings, often in close-up, together with informative contextual images of the artists, their materials, their bush “studios,” performance and archival images, will surely fill a yawning gap in a subject area hungry for such a publication. It is however not a coffee table book but rather a substantial work with scholarly but accessible texts by seven expert writers from a mix of art and anthropology backgrounds who know how to communicate in that intercultural space between indigenous communities and Western institutions, and between academia and a general audience.

The overall appearance and feel of “Dream Traces” is contemporary and inviting, as is its title. The square format of the book with its earthy and spare cover image of the head and shoulders of a Mimi figure, the feel of the paper and, the balanced layout, with ample white surrounds, reflect the refined aesthetics employed in the treatment of the bark paintings. The works are never presented as cluttered, old, or artifactual but rather as fresh and contemporary. This contemporary feel is consistent with the book’s central thesis that bark paintings can no longer be confined to ethnographic museums, restrained by the past, without acknowledgement of them as contemporary art forms, anymore than they can be confined to art galleries restrained by present aesthetic values. An anthropological and museographic approach provides the contextualisation required by the artists.

Unlike the Eurocentricity that mars so much writing about Australian Indigenous art and culture, this publication is progressive in a number of areas. Most significantly it includes right up front an essay by Yolngu elder and scholar Joe Neparrnga Gumbula. He is a representative of the Yolngu (a generic term for the Aboriginal people of central and eastern Arnhem Land) and speaks with a

Yolngu voice, unmediated by any nonindigenous voice. This points to an equivalence akin to the relationship one expects between art writers and artists in the Western art world, and is a subtle but significant distinction that points to the book’s overall intention to demonstrate a range of equivalences across cultural and disciplinary boundaries. The Aboriginal voice is present in various ways throughout the book. Gumbula explains the origin of the book’s innovative and evocative title based in Yolngu understandings of the transmission and transformation of knowledge. “Traces” is a translation of the term *luku* which in Yolngu customary law refers to the traces left by the footsteps of the ancestors for the Yolngu to follow.

These Aboriginal ways of thinking and being form a foundational frame for the book. Another progressive element, and one critical to changing readers’ perceptions of new visual experiences from “foreign” cultures is Gumbula speaking of paintings being evidence of law given by the ancestors, and revealing the system of sharing and custodianship of knowledge which assigns rights to painters over certain stories based on kinship lines (or family trees, as he describes it). He also notes that painting, “is like the backbone of the land and sea and like bones they hold country,” which in turn holds culture and keeps it alive as long as it is cared for spiritually through ceremony and painting, which is like ceremony on bark.

This “backbone” concept also functions to hold the book together in a coherent way. Artists and their bark paintings are organised around the elemental themes of water, land, and sky, which in the worldview of Aboriginal people are indivisible. This catalogue and the accompanying exhibition of works are based on 43 barks from MEG’s collection with some 30 additions from other Swiss collections. The contents move in a mostly logical progression from the simple to the complex, starting with essays on bark painting motifs and issues of identity, and moving to pieces on materials and pigments by De Largy Healy, the constitution of a collection by Colombo Dougoud and Müller, and the economic and political dimension of the barks, again by De Largy Healy. Following on there is an expose on the bark trade nationally and internationally, also by De Largy Healy, before an in-depth study by Australian anthropologist Luke Taylor who takes us on a journey from the earliest collectors to the more recent development of art centres and the activities in the commercial marketplace. Finally, Howard Morphy, an Australian visual anthropologist amongst other things, historicises bark paintings within the contemporary art context and the contested frontiers between Western and non-Western perceptions of fine art, and wades into the art versus artifact debate.

Morphy’s consummate essay is a fitting finale. It traces the reception of Aboriginal art since its collection in the 1900s as a primitive or ethnographic form to fine art, arguing for its status as contemporary art, and exposes how indigenous art has been made servile to Western art historically. He delves into the persistent dilemma of early attempts by his progressive predecessors from the 1950s and 60s to promote the “... aesthetic qualities of bark paintings and the conceptual capacity of the artists ...”

and who were criticised for negating cultural and social values. The pivotal role of Czech born French collector Karel Kupka, acclaimed for making significant contributions to the knowledge of this art form and for augmenting many collections in Europe, is an example Morphy draws on to advance his discussion on the pitfalls of aligning indigenous art with Western art history. In his iconic book, "The Dawn of Art" (1962) Kupka attempts to give bark painting equivalence to Western art history by locating it at the beginning of time, thereby freezing it in the past and inadvertently denying its on-going development as perpetually contemporary. Morphy opposes the relegation of non-Western art to a subcategory of Western art and argues that non-Western art should be judged on its own aesthetic values. He, like others in the field, calls for the writing of Aboriginal art history to be placed on its own trajectory. He firmly believes that aesthetics can be both universal and particular, but does not expand on this here. However it seems to me that by continuing to call it Aboriginal art would define it ethnically and foreground its connection to a specific culture in a defined geographic locale, with links to a "timeless" past. This is, of course, its very strength but also its perceived weakness, disabling a comfortable fit with the current understanding of contemporary art. One example among many was the rejection of Aboriginal art as "folk art" by contemporary art fairs in Cologne and Basel on a number of occasions. Instead of writing a parallel history, as intimated, why not consider changing the shape of contemporary art, to be part of a one-world art history? Maybe the term "bark painting" is a liability, with the emphasis on the medium and not the conceptual content. After all, we do not say paper painting or canvas painting?

This book achieves what Boris Wastiau, Director of the MEG, in his introduction writes about the MEG's collection, offering "... visitors an ABC of Aboriginal art from Arnhem Land ... which enables them to recognise and understand a particular body of art, to encourage them to question their own values and perspectives and to take an intellectual stand on these issues ..." It is also valuable for experts and the general readership but suffers through the absence of an index and a listing of plates and figures.

Margo Neale

Čvorović, Jelena: Roast Chicken and Other Gypsy Stories. Oral Narratives among Serbian Gypsies. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010. 131 pp. ISBN 978-3-631-60403-8. (European University Studies; Series XIX: Ethnology, 75) Price: € 19.80

Unter dem Titel "Roast Chicken and Other Gypsy stories. Oral Narratives among Serbian Gypsies" beschäftigt sich die Autorin Jelena Čvorović in ihrem Buch mit der oralen Tradition unterschiedlicher in Serbien ansässigen ethnischen Gruppen wie der Gurbeti, Njamci, Čergari, Xoraxane oder Karavlast, die sie unter dem Sammelbegriff "Gypsies" zusammenfasst. In den Mittelpunkt ihrer Forschung rückt sie die Bedeutung der über Generationen hinweg mündlich überlieferten Narrationen als kulturelle Strategien der Anpassung an die Umwelt. Neben

den zahlreichen soziokulturellen und religiösen Unterschieden, die Čvorović zwischen den serbischen "Gypsies" identifiziert, stellen die tradierten Narrationen eine wichtige Gemeinsamkeit dieser sonst sehr heterogenen Gruppen dar. Als "kulturelle Dokumente" (78) sind die Erzählungen wichtige Identifikationsfaktoren und vermitteln Anleitungen zum adäquaten sozialen Verhalten der Gruppenmitglieder.

Um dies zu untermauern, stützt sich die Autorin im Wesentlichen auf (neo)evolutionistische Theorien und die Annahme, dass orale Traditionen auf erprobtem Wissen und Strategien beruhen, die sich in der Vergangenheit als erfolgreich erwiesen haben. Auf diese Weise halten Narrationen wertvolle Informationen zum Überleben und der Reproduktion von Gruppen bereit. Der Rückgriff auf den Evolutionismus und die Kulturökologie ist sicherlich ein interessantes, wenn auch riskantes Unterfangen, zumal sich die Frage stellt, ob mit der Anpassung an wechselnde Umweltbedingungen letztlich alle Formen des soziokulturellen Wandels innerhalb der unterschiedlichen Gruppen der serbischen "Gypsies" erklärt werden können.

Die Argumentation der Autorin, die das Studium der Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie absolviert hat, baut auf der Sammlung von insgesamt 80 Erzählungen serbischer "Gypsies" und Erhebungen zur sozioökonomischen Situation der ethnischen Gruppen auf, die sie im Zuge von Feldforschungen im westserbischen Bezirk Mačva zwischen 2002 und 2008 durchgeführt hat. Ihren methodischen Zugang legt Čvorović sehr deutlich dar, vom Zugang zum Forschungsfeld bis hin zur Präsentation ihrer Forschungsergebnisse im Kreise ihrer InformantInnen. Dabei beschreibt sie das *storytelling* – das Erzählen von Geschichten – als soziales Ereignis, bei dem die Familie, Verwandte, Nachbarn und Kinder allen Alters (15) zugegen sind, Essen und türkischer Kaffee gereicht werden und die zumeist älteren ErzählerInnen einen sehr individuellen Stil aus Mimik, Gestik und Rhetorik besitzen.

In einem historischen Abriss informiert Čvorović zu Beginn über die vermutete Herkunft der "Gypsies" aus Indien, die Wanderungsbewegungen, die sie nach Europa geführt haben und die aktuellen Bevölkerungszahlen in Ost- und Westeuropa. Ein umfangreicherer Teil ist der Darstellung der "Gypsies" in Serbien aus historischer und aktueller Perspektive gewidmet. Als wesentliches Charakteristikum betont sie die ausgesprochene Heterogenität der "Gypsies" in Serbien, die sich in unterschiedliche, klar voneinander abgegrenzte Subgruppen aufgliedern. Irritierend ist jedoch die Vermischung unterschiedlicher Bezeichnungen und Kategorien ohne nähere Kontextualisierung. So werden "Gypsies" gleichzeitig auch als Roma bezeichnet – ein weiterer Oberbegriff für die vielen unterschiedlichen in Europa akadierenden Gruppen, der im aktuellen politischen und akademischen Diskurs Anwendung findet – obwohl sich Čvorović anfänglich von diesem Begriff abgrenzt, weil einzelne Subgruppen in Serbien diesen ablehnen. In weiterer Folge werden die Bezeichnungen "ethnic group", "tribe" und "minority" synonym für die Gruppen serbischer "Gypsies" angeführt, wobei die Autorin allgemein darauf verzichtet, eine Bestimmung und Einbettung der von ihr verwendeten