

# Charles Greul

## The Non-Aboriginal Forebearer to the Northwest Coast Printmaking Movement

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Charles Greul, a non-Aboriginal printmaker working in the style of the Northwest Coast during the mid-twentieth century, is an enigma. The only known information is his birth date of 1923; his possible immigrant status; and a printmaking career in British Columbia spanning the 1950s to the early 1960s. This scarcity of information is perhaps why there are limited references to him or his work in books on Northwest Coast art. However, Edwin Hall and Margaret Blackman are the exception, and in their book *Northwest Coast Indian Graphics* they state:

A non-Indian, Charles Greul, began making silk-screen designs on rice paper about the same time [as Ellen Neel] or slightly later. Although his designs were not very *authentic*, the prints were inexpensive and sold very well on the local *tourist market*... Beyond their historical interest, Greul prints are important because some artists maintain that they began producing silk screen prints in *reaction* to Greul's work, hoping to gain public appreciation of true Northwest Coast Indian design.<sup>1</sup> [*Emphasis my own*]

Authentic. The tourist market. Reactive. These terms, taken from the above quotation, represent the issues Greul and his work bring

to the fore. To them I add 'appropriation.' Together, these four terms will provide a basis from which to discuss the ways Greul and his prints inserted themselves into the changing discourse of Northwest Coast Aboriginal art production, appreciation and dissemination. This paper aims to provide a contextualization of Greul's work in order to argue that his prints played a crucial role in the rise of the printmaking medium among Aboriginal artists of the Northwest Coast. One of Greul's promotional flyers, found in the Carleton University Art Gallery's MacDonald collection, will be the foundation from which this argument derives (Figure 1).

Leslie Dawn provides a succinct description of the rise of printmaking in Northwest Coast art in his catalogue essay for *The Northwest Coast Native Print*. According to Dawn, the two decades between the 1940s and the late 1960s encompassed a period of increased artistic production that created a climate that would support and encourage this upcoming movement.<sup>2</sup> However, it was not until the mid-1970s that printmaking came to prominence. Its emergence is particularly astounding as, according to Bill Reid, "just putting a design on paper, whether painted, drawn or printed is without precedent."<sup>3</sup>

In the early 1900s it was generally believed that Aboriginal arts would soon be

extinct and thus various collecting programs were created in order to preserve what remained.<sup>4</sup> It was also during this period that the National Museum omitted showing the production of artworks by Aboriginal peoples as they believed the resulting works were “best presented in their appropriated form, as the subject of images done by non-Native artists.”<sup>5</sup> Emily Carr’s work is such an example. Not only was she producing paintings of Northwest Coast aboriginal life, but she believed in the forthcoming extinction of Aboriginal art. Furthermore, she disagreed with the emerging musings of a “revival” of Native arts by Native artists. In a letter to Alice Ravenhill, Director of the British Columbia Indian Arts and Welfare Society (BCIAWS), Carr states:

I think you will understand that I love Indians and Indian things but I do not favour a re-hash for the sake of decoration when their great original use is gone. It seems to be an indignity to use them and these totem symbols for ornamentation only. Mind you I have been guilty myself. I used to put Indian designs on pottery where they do not belong. My designs were true and genuine but I came to feel it vulgarized them, pampers the tourist and potters who knew nothing at all about Indian (or any other art) made a horrible mongrel jumble. Neither Indian nor White which so disgusted me I stopped short... This generation of Indian carvers cannot do the same. He could only make shoddy make-believes. Why try and force them back to what is done with and should be decently folded away. Let Indian art great in the past, stop right there, rather than becoming meaningless ornamentation.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of her letter she concludes by saying “Perhaps all my ideas are wrong.” While her ideas were not uncommon for the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a few decades the belief in

disappearing Aboriginal cultures was replaced by that of their “revival.”

This “revival” of Northwest Coast art is succinctly described by Blackman and Hill thusly:

A revival, termed by some a Renaissance, of Northwest Coast art began in the 1960s, accompanied, not coincidentally, by a growing interest on the part of the Indians themselves in their past and a dramatic increase in ceremonialism. In many respects, the impetus for this revival was internal, arising from a growing realization that aspects of the old lifeways had value in the modern world.<sup>7</sup>

With additional aid from non-Aboriginal organizations, such as the BCIAWS which wanted to “revive and transform Native art,” the 1960s saw a “sudden increase in the number of Native artists who turned to silkscreen prints as a new means of self-expression.”<sup>8</sup> The print medium was especially suited to this as it allowed artists a new freedom from which to work. Non-traditional, it was free from both cultural and historical constraints, thereby becoming an “arena of experimentation” for many artists, subsequently leading to an “expansion of the boundaries of traditional art forms.”<sup>9</sup> Consequently, many artists have realized that “silkscreens are ideal both for producing traditional Northwest Coast Indian designs and for creating contemporary designs drawing upon traditional motifs and styles.”<sup>10</sup> This freedom of expression was combined with an awareness that the prints would be viewed and distributed among a non-Aboriginal consumer public. As Dawn states, “Non-Native in origin, it could nonetheless assert a growing sense of native identity and culture within the context of white culture, without violating its own history or losing its own special identity.”<sup>11</sup>

However, Greul's prints were created both before this revival occurred and before the medium's popularity was established.

To further discuss Greul's work I will use one of his promotional flyers, donated to CUAG in 1999 by George and Joanne MacDonald (See figure 1). In its upper left hand corner, Greul provides a title: "Pacific Northwest Coast Indian Designs" (Figure 2). He fails to announce that he is a non-Aboriginal man working with designs foreign to him. Regardless of whether his non-Aboriginal audience was aware of this, many members of his *Aboriginal* audience were, and their subsequent anger was a leading factor in their decision to use his medium in order to correctly depict their designs - an argument that will be demonstrated later in this paper using the work of Robert Davidson.

The term appropriation describes a process through which someone else "speaks for, defines, describes, represents, uses or recruits the images, stories, experience and dreams of others for their own."<sup>12</sup> According to Isabella Alexander, author of the article *White Law, Black Art* which discusses art appropriation in Australia, the "appropriation of art must be viewed within [the] larger context of systematic colonization."<sup>13</sup> This statement rightly implies that an *imbalance of power* is at the fore of art appropriation, specifically in settler societies. The artist whose work is being appropriated is often overpowered, figuratively speaking, by the artist who is appropriating. Greul fills the latter role in his position as a non-Aboriginal man. In the half-century before his prints, Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Coast were forced by the Indian Act to stop many of their ceremonial traditions and take them underground – a period when many of their traditional arts were thought to be lost. What has been dubbed the

"Renaissance" of Northwest Coast art, occurring in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, actively disproves theories that Aboriginal arts and culture had been irrevocably lost. However, Greul would have been working in a period when this belief was still prominent, thereby placing him in a position of power as "appropriator."

In his article *Ontologies of the Image and Economies of Exchange*, Fred Myers discusses appropriation in relation to Aboriginal "art."<sup>14</sup> The term is in quotations, both by Myers and myself, as most Aboriginal objects that we in the West call "art" were not conceived of this way by the cultures within which they were created. In Evan Maurer's article *Determining Quality in Native American Art*, he states that many objects from Native American culture, which we in the West would consider art, have a functional purpose or were based on utilitarian prototypes. Furthermore, few Native American languages have words that correspond to "art" and "artist." He argues:

Our modern willingness to consider aesthetics and beauty apart from qualities of technical skill is one symptom of the separation of art from life that exists in our culture. However, in traditional Native American cultures, art was totally integrated into the social fabric, and many individuals of both sexes produced some sort of object that reflected a concern for the harmonious union of beauty and function.<sup>15</sup>

Although the classification of Aboriginal art has moved quite rightly from that of "artefact" to "art," the term's Western connotations ascribe great power and prestige to the artist and great reverence to their works. "Art" as a term used by Aboriginal artists to describe themselves and their work is a more recent development and some still refrain from using

it. Robert Bringhurst, a Haida and Navajo linguistic specialist, states “I have found no word for *art* per se in Haida,”<sup>16</sup> while Ki-Ke-In has said “I don’t make art and I never have. I have never once told anyone that I am an artist.”<sup>17</sup> The reason I discuss this distinction is because it has been argued that the term does not adequately convey the spiritual and ritual use, whether of the actual object or of its designs, that Aboriginal peoples ascribe to their work. Doreen Jensen, a Gitksan scholar, states “There are values and meanings involved in Native objects other than those appreciated in the existing art world.”<sup>18</sup> Maurer seconds this, saying “Non-Indians will never fully comprehend the complex cultural, religious and metaphysical associations of a traditional Indian art object.”<sup>19</sup> This lack of understanding on the part of non-Aboriginals stems partly from Western society’s reliance on text. In Bill McLennan and Karen Duffek’s *Ways of Seeing, Ways of Knowing* they state

Today, we rely on the intervention of the written word to define and delineate the components of a painting tradition that developed within an oral society...[our focus shifts] from a multidimensional view of the painted object...toward a formalist perception of the work as two dimensional... Our view of the object becomes restricted, both literally and figuratively, to its surface.<sup>20</sup>

Adding to these scholars is Charlotte Townsend-Gault, who perhaps summarizes it best when she says, “Every attempt to organize and order native Northwest Coast cultural production has always and quite properly been impeded by the disconnect between orders of perception.”<sup>21</sup>

Greul’s prints then, are not just aesthetically pleasing designs that he appropriated from the cultures of the

Northwest coast; they are spiritually important images which hold great power for the cultures, communities and individuals from which he took them. More specifically, the images are crest designs, “stylized representations of natural species that functioned as ways of seeing the social order and the spirit world.”<sup>22</sup> They are status symbols as well as markers of social and legal transactions that either belong to an individual or are the cultural property of an entire community. The right to use a specific crest must be earned and they are thereafter designated as “immaterial and inalienable property.”<sup>23</sup>

Myers also discusses cultural property, a term which I believe aptly applies to these crest designs. Cultural property is:

...an important conceptual framework that has been put forward as a basis for claiming protection of indigenous and minority groups against cultural appropriation. The fundamental claim derives from the assertion that art is ‘essential to’ or ‘constitutive of’ or ‘expressive of’ the identity of the group.<sup>24</sup>

I believe that Greul appropriated an aspect of the Northwest Coast aboriginal peoples *cultural property* as art is often a medium through which this concept is visualized. Myers continues, stating “Art has offered a medium through which they have been able to make themselves [Aboriginal peoples] visible on their own terms, allowing them, more or less, to intervene in the representations circulating about them.”<sup>25</sup> This statement demonstrates two things that are relevant to my discussion of Greul. The first is why appropriation of Aboriginal art can be so harmful – since it incorrectly represents important beliefs in a

medium they use for this very purpose. The second is why they reacted to Greul's work in such a powerful and, eventually, self-motivating way – their art production *allow[ed] them...to intervene in the representations circulating about them* (taken from the above quotation).<sup>26</sup>

Greul's prints are not the first case of unlicensed appropriation of Aboriginal designs. There are two other significant cases relevant to this discussion. The first is the application of Northwest Coast designs on ceramics, which also took place in the 1950s. The second occurred much earlier, in the 1700s, by the Ursuline nuns who created birch bark curiosities. This second case will introduce the presence of the tourist market and its marked role in the increased production and sale of Aboriginal art.

In the mid-1950s, David Lambert, the founder of Vancouver's Lambert Potteries, created a line of utilitarian ceramics decorated with Northwest Coast designs.<sup>27</sup> According to Ruth Phillips, his use of these designs "represented both the nationalist impulse and the admiration for Aboriginal art that often lay behind such appropriations during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>28</sup> Lambert's idea to use Northwest Coast motifs came from a friend's challenge to develop both a local and national vernacular. Lambert quotes his friend as saying:

Now, why don't you sit down and think of something that would be new and yet old at the same time...something using the coast here as we know it and that people would come to recognize as truly pertaining to the country in which we live.<sup>29</sup>

This attempt to create a national Canadian identity through Aboriginal art is not unique to this example, but can also be applied to most other instances of appropriation which

occurred during this period. In his article "Northwest Coast Art and National Identity 1900-1950" Dawn succinctly describes the desire behind this movement:

Within the growing climate of nationalism that developed during WWI, serious thought was given to finding ways of marketing a distinct Canadian identity. At the level of applied arts...Native imagery was seen as having potential for forming part of Canada's self-image through its appropriation by industry and craft.<sup>30</sup>

Dawn also discusses Marius Barbeau, a Canadian ethnologist, and his similar desire. Barbeau

advocated the appropriation of Native arts, myths and music, especially those from the Northwest coast, into the patrimony and heritage of the nation. Although he repeatedly stated that these arts and cultures were dead, he also saw them as a uniquely national source of inspiration for non-Native artists, writers and musicians producing a vital Canadian culture.<sup>31</sup>

An organization that was at the fore of this nationalist movement was the British Columbia Indian Arts and Welfare Society, previously mentioned in reference to its belief in the revival of Northwest Coast art. Established in 1939, BCIAWS's mandate was to both revive and transform Aboriginal art. Ravenhill, its director, was "interested in how Native designs could be adapted to modern objects and campaigned to see traditional images enter the lexicon of industrial textile design" in order to promote Canadian identity and increase the incomes of Aboriginal artists.<sup>32</sup>

This belief, that Aboriginal art could play a vital role in the formation of a national Canadian identity, was also applied on a much smaller scale to individual Canadian artisans. It was believed that aspects of Aboriginal art and

design would help Canadian artists improve their own work. In a National Museum of Canada publication, Harlan Smith argues against the historical dependence of Canadian industry on foreign designs. He states “The simplicity and freedom of expression of prehistoric Canadian art is what modern craftsmen most need to counteract the tendency to over-decoration, mechanical technique, mathematical monotony and lack of individuality.”<sup>33</sup> This quotation presents a very firm and compelling statement as to why Canadian artisans should look to Aboriginal design as inspiration, as to not would relegate their work to such things as “mathematical monotony.” Absent from his statement, however, is any reference to the people or cultures producing these most sought-after designs, leaving the reader with a sense that they could freely take and use the designs, a belief Greul seems to have seized upon.

An attempt was therefore made through various government and non-government organizations to showcase art and objects that connected non-Aboriginal people to their heritage, a heritage that was now promoted as being closely tied to the native Aboriginal population. I believe this nationalistic program strongly influenced Greul’s decision to recreate and distribute Northwest Coast designs.

An additional similarity between both Greul’s and Lambert’s appropriation is their application of these designs to a new medium. Northwest Coast art is without a ceramics tradition, meaning Lambert had to borrow designs from woodcarving and other media. He did this by researching and reading about Native history and even, he claims, going “to the Indian peoples themselves...and they were most helpful and kind, terrifically interested.”<sup>34</sup> Greul was also working within a medium, printmaking, which was not yet commonly

used by Northwest coast artists. This raises the question: if he was applying Northwest Coast designs to a new medium, where did he copy the designs from? Although answering this question would require further research, one possible explanation is from early publications of Northwest Coast art, one of which is *Art of the Northwest Coast Indians* written by Robert Bruce Inverarity, published in 1950. This book describes the conventions of Northwest Coast art, including elements that would differentiate one animal from another. For example, Inverarity describes a frog thusly: wide toothless mouth; flat nose; no tail.<sup>35</sup> Greul includes a frog design on his flyer and it appears to adhere to these conventions (Figure 3). Although this specific example is speculation, it is reasonable to assume that Greul had a source for his designs as, to the untrained eye, they resemble Northwest Coast designs. He also chooses to represent the most common designs, including the raven, killer whale, eagle and beaver.

Along with his copied designs, Greul also designed his own. In the bottom left hand corner of the flyer Greul reproduced one of his own innovations: a seahorse design (Figure 4). To the right of it he wrote “This design is not an Indian design!” As a disqualifier, it tells us much - it illuminates Greul’s awareness of his use of Northwest Coast designs, including his knowledge of what designs were, and were not, included in Aboriginal culture. His remark also demonstrates that while recognizing the tradition he was working within, he was not afraid to take artistic liberties. Greul’s decision introduces the issue of “authenticity,” especially the term’s close relation to the historical valuing of Aboriginal art.

Historically, Aboriginal art and, earlier, ethnographic objects, were subject to a Euro-Canadian value system that rated them in

accordance to how closely their production and design aligned with the “traditional” versions created before Western contact. The former object was said to be “authentic” while the latter, “inauthentic;” these value-laden judgments “reflect stereotyped ideas about Indians and expectations of the art appropriate to noble savages untainted by Western society.”<sup>36</sup> Fortunately, throughout the second half of the 20th century this view began to change. In “Tradition in Native American Art,” J.C.H King writes,

Traditionalism can be based on techniques and materials. However, as in all the elements that go to make up any particular material culture tradition, the change in technique or tools and the substitution or addition of foreign materials do not necessarily alter the total traditional aspect of an object.<sup>37</sup>

Many Aboriginal artists began using Western tools in their work because, as Kwakwaka’wakw artist Ellen Neel succinctly states:

Then the white man came! He brought with him saws, axes and hatchets; steel chisels and knives; white, green, yellow and black paints. No involved question of propriety was raised as to whether or not the new tools should be used. Rather they were seized upon avidly. And with startling results...The carving took a quarter of the time; and the paints allowed a wide range of expression not previously possible.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, the use of Western materials slowly became less of a concern when judging a work’s authenticity. King continues his previous argument by stating, “Specific traits, whether technical or aesthetic, whether derived from new materials or a new social and political context, may develop in an ancient

society without rendering its art non-traditional.”<sup>39</sup> However, the meaning shifted to whether an Aboriginal artist made the work in question. King argues, “Indian art must be made by Indians... The crucial term in Indian art is “Indian;” without it, Indian art has no existence, whatever the apparent traditionalism of the artifacts to the European or American beholder.”<sup>40</sup>

It is for this reason that the terms authentic and inauthentic can be discussed in relation to Greul. Although he was using designs based in Northwest Coast traditions, a previously important factor for authenticity, he is, as King succinctly states, not Aboriginal, the key criterion for authenticity in the production of Aboriginal art. Greul’s work is interesting, however, as his appropriation does not extend to materials or technique: his use of printmaking was new.

Besides appropriation and authenticity, Greul’s work introduces the importance of the tourist market for the promotion and dissemination of Aboriginal art. I believe Greul was not only aware of this market but actively participated within it. I would go so far as to say that it was his main impetus for creating and selling prints in Northwest Coast designs.

Greul’s interest in marketing and selling his work is made abundantly clear in his flyer. In the upper left hand corner, under his title designating the prints as “Pacific Northwest Coast Indian Designs,” he advertises their reproduction on either postcards or Japanese rice paper. His distribution of postcards is a clear sign of his interest in mass distribution as they are easily portable and less costly than an actual print. On the right side of the flyer he wrote, in bold, the word **ORDER** and in cursive handwriting beside it, *please!* (Figure 5). I find his use of different text interesting as he vacillates between opposing tones:

firmness and pleading. His handwritten poster also suggests a certain kind of frenzy. His hand-drawn arrows and exclamation points which cover the page draw your attention to many different areas at once, as though he couldn't contain his excitement. He uses three arrows to draw attention to the address to which the order is directed, above which is the aforementioned **ORDER please!** To the right of this, written sideways in the margin, he writes "All prints are hand printed!" Even as he participates in the market he attempts to persuade his customers that the work is genuine and "authentic."

Across the bottom of the poster, on the left side, Greul writes "*Thank you for your order! Please display prints!*" (Figure 6). His call to *Please display prints!* is intriguing as it clearly demonstrates his concern for promotion - he would like his prints displayed in order to allow additional customers to see them and subsequently inquire after them. In the section of the flyer marked for return address, Greul wrote "Ship to: F.O.B Your store." The purpose of his flyer was accordingly to attract businesses, whom he hoped would buy his prints in bulk and subsequently re-distribute them to their customers. In Blackman and Hall's statement concerning Greul, written in the 1980s, they write "Greul prints can still be found in British Columbia shops." Currently, his prints are offered for sale on eBay. I was able to find eight for 85 dollars and a ninth for 106 dollars and 25 cents. All are featured on his flyer. Unfortunately, the eight are incorrectly classified as Inuit (Eskimo/Indian) Art, the origin of which I can only assume comes from the prevalence of Inuit prints during the 1950s, the same decade Greul was making and distributing his own work. However the latter, and more costly, print is classified as a West

Coast Canadian Native Thunderbird. This print is also on his flyer but under a different name. Greul calls this work *Flying Eagle!*, a discrepancy that perhaps comes from his lack of understanding of the spiritual and narrative importance of his appropriated designs (Figure 7).

Underneath his plea to *Please display prints!*, Greul writes a lengthy description of the different costs associated with purchasing them (See Figure 6). I have transcribed it here: "Each print black on white. Handprinted on handmade paper. \$1.50 in a mailing tube. No charge for mailing and packaging!!! Retail \$3. Each print without tube \$1.30. Please mark No. of print ord. on the design!" He circles in red pen "\$1.50" as well as "without tube \$1.30," clearly drawing your attention to the low cost of the prints.

The Aboriginal tourist "art and curiosity" market within which Greul participated emerged through the convergence of

two aesthetic and ideological movements... [which gave it] a new prominence within the history of settler art: the taste for 'primitive art,' which was first promoted by avant-garde European artists at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the growing movement of cultural nationalism within which Aboriginal art became identified as distinctly and uniquely Canadian.<sup>41</sup>

In her book *Trading Identities*, Phillips focuses on both the emergence and the effects of the tourist trade on Aboriginal art production and its dissemination. While there was value in the market for Aboriginal artists as "the primary value of souvenir arts lay in their use as exchange commodities that provided basic subsistence,"<sup>42</sup> at the same time "multiple replication of the object - supply - is the essential precondition for a successful commodity trade, but this same condition



empties the object of value for the rare art collector.”<sup>43</sup>

Tourist art also “illuminates the histories of interaction between Native and non-Native.”<sup>44</sup> One such example is that of the Ursuline nuns who produced birch bark souvenirs in large quantities during the 1700s. Having been taught how to work in birch bark and moosehair by local Aboriginal people, the nuns “invented a line of objects ‘dans le gout sauvage’ which they sold as curiosities.”<sup>45</sup> These curiosities included boxes, trays and pincushions, most of which displayed either floral compositions or scenes of Aboriginal life.<sup>46</sup> The nun’s use of Aboriginal methods and materials likely arose from the scarcity of imported goods to the convent, specifically during its early years. As Phillips says, “The nuns had sought instruction in the preparation and use of local materials for many necessary activities – including sewing and embroidery – from the Aboriginal people they had come to convert.”<sup>47</sup> Their ensuing moosehair-embroidered wares were their most famous and, combined with the birch bark curiosities, earned them significant income.<sup>48</sup> This income was made possible through their decision to capitalize on the early tourist market. As Phillips argues:

It seems reasonable to conclude that the original Ursuline house, so renowned for major embroidery projects, did not engage in the more minor production of curios ‘dans le gout sauvage’ until their attractiveness as gifts and as commercial products had been demonstrated by others.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore,

The stimuli for the nuns’ invention must have come, then, not only from their ever-present need for appropriate gifts to send

to benefactors but also from their desire to capitalize on the new market that they, as good entrepreneurs, were quick to identify.<sup>50</sup>

The nun’s success lay in their wares’ popularity, which was directly related to the materials used. As Phillips says,

Both materials were strongly identified with the Aboriginal peoples of North America and their free, hunting life. The incorporation of these materials, then, reinforced and enhanced the iconographic meanings and the curiosity value of the objects made for them.<sup>51</sup>

Two-hundred years after the nuns’ production, the use of Aboriginal materials and designs on tourist market curios was still prevalent. These objects let their owners live vicariously within a culture that was increasingly being promoted as part of the Canadian national heritage. Consumers were, in a sense, “armchair travellers.” However, concerns about the market, especially with regard to the vast amount of reproductions, were emerging. In response, the BCIAWS attempted to establish a standard for craft production to remedy a situation it found “unruly, unregulated and degraded.”<sup>52</sup> They meant to “rebuke the ‘low’ artist curio and produce a call to educated middle-class collectors,”<sup>53</sup> for they believed the state of Native arts and crafts was turning into a mass-produced affair, one that insisted “workers turn out great quantities of articles, with little thought to the right colouring and detail,” leading to the creation of “cheap and tawdry” works as opposed to ones of “beauty and quality.”<sup>54</sup>

A subsequently intriguing question asks “What is the difference between the nun’s appropriation of Aboriginal materials and

Greul's appropriation of designs?" Phillips provides the answer:

In retrospect, 1860 represents the turning point in these histories of apparently unproblematic cross-borrowing [referring to the curio production of the Ursuline nuns]. With the establishment of anthropology and art history as scientific disciplines and particularly with the development of doctrines of cultural evolutionism, the fluidity of cultural exchanges in the contact zone would congeal. Authenticity would be defined...in essentialist ways as a function of the maker's ethnic identity and of the cultural "purity" of styles, materials and techniques. The great expansion of consumerist economics during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century reinforced this tendency, causing Native people...to become careful of their cultural copyright as a means of protecting their markets.<sup>55</sup>

It is within this changing environment that Greul's work exists, thereby illuminating why Northwest Coast artists were so infuriated, and thus motivated, to produce their own prints – they, rightly, wanted control over their cultural property, their crest designs, in order to create accurate works for distribution.

Dawn provides an illuminating comment on the market during the period between 1900-1950. He states:

The new audiences for Native arts were seen as non-Native consumers. Native arts were thus heralded as commodities managed within a capitalist system, whose sale could enhance the economic position of an otherwise disadvantaged group, rather than as objects affirming ancient social structures and ceremonies. Deprived of their initial social context, they were to be viewed for purely aesthetic enjoyment.<sup>56</sup>

This statement could also provide an explanation as to why Greul was ignorant of the cultural meaning behind his designs: the market was geared towards non-Native consumers who cared for the aesthetics of a work over its meaning. Dawn's statement also references my earlier discussion of the shift from "artifact" to "art." While giving the work a certain cachet, according to Western standards, the descriptor of "art" also means that the cultural specificity of the design recedes. This lies in the classification of art as objects of beauty to be enjoyed on an aesthetic level, which does not allow the purpose and meaning of Aboriginal-made works of art to emerge. These beliefs were prevalent during the period Greul was working.

Nevertheless, Greul's prints and their descriptor as *Pacific Northwest Coast Indian Designs* did anger many Northwest Coast artists, among them Robert Davidson. In her biography, titled *Robert Davidson: Haida Printmaker*, Hilary Stewart refers to the impetus Davidson felt to create his own work in reaction to Greul's. She says:

Perhaps the greatest stimulus for the young artist [Davidson] to succeed at making and selling good prints came in a perverse way from a man he never met. A European immigrant had seen a good market in printed reproductions of Northwest Coast art and was selling his own poorly designed, misinformed versions of Native crest designs in non-traditional colours. Printed on Japanese rice paper...his reproductions and postcards...bore the words *Authentic Indian Design*. These poor imitations angered Robert so much that he determined to make and sell quality prints in the hope of displacing them.<sup>57</sup>

The desire to correct mis-information, especially when it refers to something

intrinsically valuable to your self-image, is very strong. Davidson, rightly, did not want Northwest Coast crest designs used incorrectly. I speculate that it was especially infuriating as these reproductions were done thoughtlessly by a non-Aboriginal man, who was, if Stewart is correct, new to the Northwest Coast and therefore had limited, if any, prior knowledge as to the cultural importance these designs held for Aboriginal peoples. Davidson's foray into printmaking was extremely successful and subsequently led to many other artists taking the medium as their own. A flourishing printmaking enterprise emerged and Greul's poorly designed and executed prints were one of the main reasons this was so.

Davidson is not the only figure to be so influenced by poorly executed work. Giovanni Morelli, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian politician and connoisseur of art and literature was as well. In 1880 Morelli published a book that discussed Italian paintings on view in Dresden, Munich and Berlin.<sup>58</sup> Within it, he criticized German museum directors for falsely displaying works of art attributed to the great Italian masters.<sup>59</sup> Similar to Davidson's subsequent interest in printmaking, Morelli subsequently became interested in the connoisseurship of art. His method, in which one focuses on the particular characteristics that express an artist's individuality, such as ears and fingers, is still referenced.

Both Davidson and Morelli were motivated to create, one could argue, the most important works of their career through, respectively, the mishandled use of Northwest Coast designs and the incorrect attribution of paintings. Greul's work was the impetus for Davidson while the German museum directors were Morelli's. Through their ignorance these men, Greul and the museum directors,

instigated, respectively, the creation of one of the most important and successful movements in Northwest Coast art and a new and influential method of connoisseurship.

Greul's promotional flyer is only one of several of his works included in the MacDonald collection. CUAG, as the recipient of the MacDonald collection, now has three of Greul's actual prints and two of his flyers. Two of the prints, *Untitled (Killer Whale)* (Figure 8) and *Untitled* (Figure 9) are shown on his flyer while the third is not. The latter is unique as it is a coloured lithograph instead of a black and white silkscreen (Figure 10). The Reciprocal Research Network, founded by the Museum of Anthropology, has forty-four results for Greul, eleven of which appear to be original designs. The remaining thirty-three are reproductions of these core designs, either on different paper or with added colour. The prints were either donated by Greul himself in the year 1962 or by Alexander Pratt, from the U.B.C Development Office, in 2010. The network does not have specific dates for the creation of the prints, rather identifying them as "made before" or "made during." From this I can ascertain that the range of dates within which Greul produced his prints likely runs from 1950-1962.

Counting the unique prints on his flyer adds nine more to the standing number of eleven, bringing the total number of designs to twenty. The three prints owned by CUAG are a fair representation of his known twenty prints, especially since the MacDonald collection includes a coloured lithograph of a Haida Totem Pole (See figure 10), a unique work in his oeuvre. However, I believe the most valuable aspect of CUAG's collection, with regard to works by Greul, are the flyers. These two flyers, only one of which I referenced in this paper, are comprehensively indicative of

his work as they include all known designs. Additionally, they also point to the major issues raised by his prints: authenticity, appropriation and the tourist market.

As this paper has demonstrated, these three issues are very closely connected. Their meanings, and the ways in which they surface within discussions of Aboriginal art, overlap and therefore cannot clearly be distinguished from one another. An argument including one oftentimes will include all three. For example, the authenticity of Aboriginal art has meant different things throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and this meaning has been subsequently reflected in the tourist market. Appropriation is also closely tied to authenticity and the tourist market as many Aboriginal art forms and designs have been appropriated in order to be reproduced in mass quantities for this market. Appropriation is also, I believe, valued in relation to authenticity. We seem to be more concerned with appropriation the less authentic the appropriated content. This concern is exemplified through Greul's work as it caused a subsequent reaction; a reaction which this paper has sought to make clear.

Greul's prints, although they appear transgressive today, must also be contextualized. He was creating, as all artists before him and as all artists after him will continue to do, in the time in which he lived. We cannot apply the awareness and knowledge we have accrued in the intervening years to him posthumously. As an art historian who places great value on social context, I would do a disservice by de-contextualizing him. Instead, I have tried to contextualize his work and ultimately show that he participated in the beginnings of one of the most successful movements of art within the Northwest Coast: printmaking.

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Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Edwin Hall, Margaret Blackman and Vincent Rickard, *Northwest Coast Indian Graphics: An Introduction to Silkscreen Prints* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 50.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie Dawn, *The Northwest Coast Native Print: A Contemporary Tradition Comes of Age* (British Columbia: Manning Press Ltd, 1984), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Dawn, *The Northwest Coast Native Print*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Dawn, *The Northwest Coast Native Print*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Dawn, *The Northwest Coast Native Print*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Scott Watson, "Art/Craft in the Early Twentieth Century," in *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas* ed. Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Jennifer Kramer and Ki-ke-in, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 358.

<sup>7</sup> Hall, *Northwest Coast Indian Graphics: An Introduction to Silkscreen Prints*, 50.

<sup>8</sup> Dawn, *The Northwest Coast Native Print*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Dawn, *The Northwest Coast Native Print*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Hall, *Northwest Coast Indian Graphics*, 50.

<sup>11</sup> Dawn, *The Northwest Coast Native Print*, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Isabella Alexander, "White Law, Black Art," *International Journal of Cultural Property* 10 (2001): 185.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander, "White Law, Black Art," 186.

<sup>14</sup> Fred Myers, "Ontologies of the Image and Economies of Exchange," *American Ethnologist* 31 (2004).

<sup>15</sup> Evan Maurer, "Determining Quality in Native American Art," in Edwin Wade ed *The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution* (Washington: Hudson Hills Press and Philbrook Art Institute, 1986), 144.

<sup>16</sup> Karen Duffek and Bill McLennan, "Ways of Seeing, Ways of Knowing," in *The Transforming Image: Painted Arts of Northwest Coast First Nations* ed. Karen Duffek and Bill McLennan (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) 113.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Thom, *Challenging Traditions: Contemporary First Nations Art of the Northwest Coast*, (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2009), 80.

<sup>18</sup> Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "The Backstory of Thiliitsapilthim – Nuuchaanulth Ceremonial Curtains and the Work of Ki-ke-in," in *Backstory: Nuuchaanulth Ceremonial Curtains and the Work of Ki-ke-in* (Vancouver: Belkin Art Gallery, 2010) 5.

<sup>19</sup> Maurer, "Determining Quality in Native American Art," 148.

<sup>20</sup> Duffek and McLennan, "Ways of Seeing, Ways of Knowing," 113.

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- <sup>21</sup> Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Circulating Aboriginality." *Journal of Material Culture* 9, no. 2 (2004): 190.
- <sup>22</sup> Duffek and McLennan, "Ways of Seeing, Ways of Knowing," 108.
- <sup>23</sup> Townsend-Gault, "Circulating Aboriginality," 184.
- <sup>24</sup> Myers, "Ontologies of the Image and Economies of Exchange,"6.
- <sup>25</sup> Myers, "Ontologies of the Image and Economies of Exchange," 7.
- <sup>26</sup> Myers, "Ontologies of the Image and Economies of Exchange," 7.
- <sup>27</sup> Ruth Phillips, "'New and Yet Old:' Aboriginality and Appropriation in Canadian Ceramics," in *On the Table: 100 Years of Functional Ceramics in Canada* (Toronto: Gardiner Museum, 2007) 65.
- <sup>28</sup> Phillips, "'New and Yet Old:' Aboriginality and Appropriation in Canadian Ceramics," 65.
- <sup>29</sup> Phillips, "'New and Yet Old:' Aboriginality and Appropriation in Canadian Ceramics," 65.
- <sup>30</sup> Leslie Dawn. "Northwest Coast Art and Canadian National Identity, 1900-1950," in *Native Art of the Northwest Coast: A History of Changing Ideas* ed. Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Jennifer Kramer and Ki-ke-in, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 313.
- <sup>31</sup> Dawn, "Northwest Coast Art and Canadian National Identity, 1900-1950," 325.
- <sup>32</sup> Scott Watson, "Two Bears," in *Bill Reid and Beyond: Expanding on Modern Native Art*, ed. Karen Duffek and Charlotte Townsend-Gault (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2004) 214.
- <sup>33</sup> Phillips, "'New and Yet Old:' Aboriginality and Appropriation in Canadian Ceramics," 64.
- <sup>34</sup> Phillips, "'New and Yet Old:' Aboriginality and Appropriation in Canadian Ceramics," 65.
- <sup>35</sup> Robert Inverarity. *Art of the Northwest Coast Indians*. (California: University of California Press, 1950), 41.
- <sup>36</sup> J.C.H King, "Tradition in Native American Art," in *The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution*, ed. Edwin Wade (Washington: Hudson Hills Press, 1986), 78.
- <sup>37</sup> King, "Tradition in Native American Art," 68.
- <sup>38</sup> Watson, "Art/Craft in the Early Twentieth Century," 358.
- <sup>39</sup> King, "Tradition in Native American Art," 92.
- <sup>40</sup> King, "Tradition in Native American Art," 92.
- <sup>41</sup> Phillips, "'New and Yet Old:' Aboriginality and Appropriation in Canadian Ceramics," 64.
- <sup>42</sup> Ruth Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast 1700-1900*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 50.

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- <sup>43</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 65.
- <sup>44</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 65.
- <sup>45</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 103.
- <sup>46</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 103.
- <sup>47</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 105.
- <sup>48</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 105.
- <sup>49</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 107.
- <sup>50</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 107.
- <sup>51</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 108.
- <sup>52</sup> Watson, "Two Bears," 214.
- <sup>53</sup> Watson, "Two Bears," 214.
- <sup>54</sup> Watson, "Two Bears," 214.
- <sup>55</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 129.
- <sup>56</sup> Dawn, "Northwest Coast Art and Canadian National Identity, 1900-1950," 307.
- <sup>57</sup> Hilary Stewart, *Robert Davidson: Haida Printmaker*, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1979), 25.
- <sup>58</sup> Johanna Vakkari, "Giovanni Morelli's 'Scientific' Method of Attribution and Its Reinterpretations from the 1960's until the 1990's" in *Journal of Art History* 70 (2001): 46
- <sup>59</sup> Vakkari, "Giovanni Morelli's 'Scientific' Method of Attribution and Its Reinterpretations from the 1960's until the 1990's," 46.

Images



Figure 1. *Flyer of 20 Northwest Coast Style Designs*, Greul, Charles. Carleton University Art Gallery - Macdonald Collection, Accession Number: 1999.33.245 35.4 by 21.5 Image courtesy of the Carleton University Art Gallery.



Figure 2. Charles Greul, detail *Flyer of 20 Northwest Coast Style Designs*, Carleton University Art Gallery - Macdonald Collection, Accession Number: 1999.33.245 35.4 by 21.5 Image courtesy of the Carleton University Art Gallery.





Figure 3. Charles Greul, detail *Flyer of 20 Northwest Coast Style Designs*, Carleton University Art Gallery - Macdonald Collection, Accession Number: 1999.33.245 35.4 by 21.5 Image courtesy of the Carleton University Art Gallery.

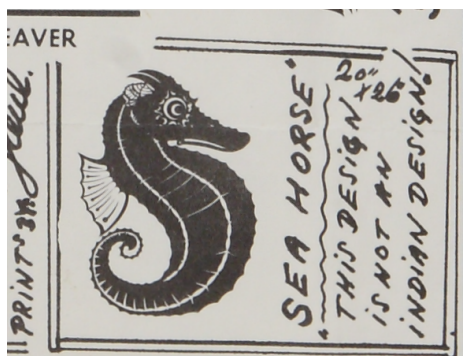


Figure 4. Charles Greul, detail *Flyer of 20 Northwest Coast Style Designs*, Carleton University Art Gallery - Macdonald Collection, Accession Number: 1999.33.245 35.4 by 21.5 Image courtesy of the Carleton University Art Gallery.

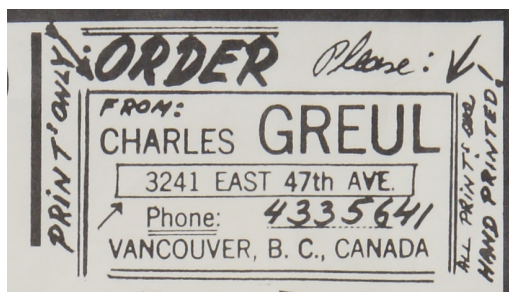


Figure 5. Charles Greul, detail *Flyer of 20 Northwest Coast Style Designs*, Carleton University Art Gallery - Macdonald Collection, Accession Number: 1999.33.245 35.4 by 21.5 Image courtesy of the Carleton University Art Gallery.

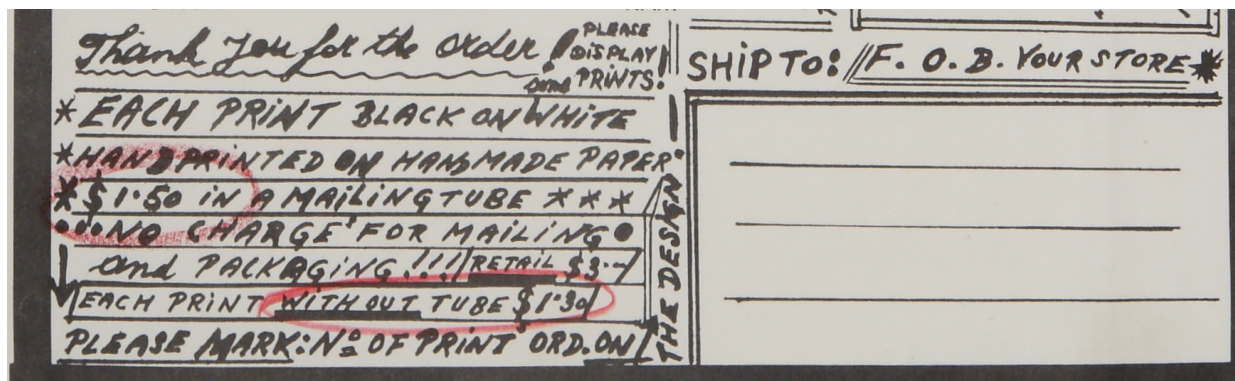


Figure 6. Charles Greul, detail *Flyer of 20 Northwest Coast Style Designs*, Carleton University Art Gallery - Macdonald Collection, Accession Number: 1999.33.245 35.4 by 21.5 Image courtesy of the Carleton University Art Gallery.



Figure 7. Charles Greul, detail *Flyer of 20 Northwest Coast Style Designs*, Carleton University Art Gallery - Macdonald Collection, Accession Number: 1999.33.245 35.4 by 21.5 Image courtesy of the Carleton University Art Gallery.



Figure 8. Charles Greul, *Untitled (Killer Whale)*, Carleton University Art Gallery - Macdonald Collection, Accession Number: 1999.33.256 99.0 by 62.2 Image courtesy of the Carleton University Art Gallery.



Figure 9. Charles Greul, *Untitled*, Carleton University Art Gallery - Macdonald Collection, Accession Number: 1999.33.257  
61.2 by 97.0 Image courtesy of the Carleton University Art Gallery.



Figure 10. Charles Greul, *Untitled (Haida Totem Pole)*, Carleton University Art Gallery - Macdonald Collection, Accession Number: 1999.33.256  
73.5 by 59.0 Image courtesy of the Carleton University Art Gallery.