

Bill Reid

Bear, 1981

bronze

7.1 cm x 7.8 cm x 6.4 cm

Collection of the Vancouver Art
Gallery, Gift of Takao Tanabe

VAG 99.45



Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery

Bill Reid

Bear, 1981



Image source: Reproduced in Robert Bringhurst. *The Black Canoe: Bill Reid and the Spirit of Haida Gwaii*. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & MacIntyre, 1991.

Artist's Biography

Nationality: Canadian
Born: 1920-01-12, Victoria, British Columbia
Died: 1998-03-13

William Ronald (Bill) Reid was a Canadian jeweler, sculptor and artist. He was born to a father of European descent and a mother from the Haida in Victoria, British Columbia. He developed a keen interest in Haida art while working as a radio announcer in Toronto, where he also studied jewelry making. Reid first learnt about his heritage from his maternal grandfather, who had himself been trained by Charles Edenshaw, a Haida artist of great renown.

In 1951 he returned to Vancouver and became interested in the symbolism in Edenshaw's work. During this time he also worked on salvaging artifacts, including many intricately carved totem poles which were then moldering in abandoned village sites, and aided in the partial reconstruction of a village in the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology.

Combining traditional forms with modern media (usually gold, silver and argillite), Reid began his career making jewelry before moving to larger sculptures in bronze and red cedar. Reid usually portrayed animals and scenes from folklore, assisting in the preservation of Haida mythology.

His most magnificent works are two large bronze sculptures, each depicting a canoe filled with human and animal figures: one black, *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*, at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC, in the United States and one green, *The Jade Canoe*, at Vancouver International Airport, in British Columbia.

He participated in the blockades of logging roads which helped save the rain forests of Gwaii Haanas (South Moresby); he also stopped work on the sculpture in Washington during this period to protest the destruction of the forests of Haida Gwaii.

Reid received honorary degrees from the University of British Columbia, the University of Toronto, the University of Victoria, the University of Western Ontario, York University, and Trent University. He received the National Aboriginal Achievement Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1994, and was made a member of the Order of British Columbia and the Order of Canada.

Having dedicated the latter part of his life to the creation of new works and these tasks of curation, Reid died in 1998, of Parkinson's disease. In July 1998, friends and relatives paddled a large cedar canoe, carved by Reid for Expo '86, on a two day journey along the Pacific coast to bring his ashes to Tanu Island in Haida Gwaii, the site of his mother's village.

Source: "Bill Reid," *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. January 12, 2006. <http://www.wikipedia.org>.

Bill Reid
Bear, 1981

Artistic Context

Nationality: Canadian

Training: Victoria College; Ryerson Institute of Technology, Toronto; Central School of Modern Design, London

Peers: Robert Davidson; Nathan Jackson; Norman Tait; Joe David; Art Thompson

Group: Northern design tradition; sculptor; North West Coast art; 20th century

Provenance: donated by Takao Tanabe in 1999; the artist

Subject: Haida history, culture and myth; fusion of Western and Haida design and culture

Other works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Bill Reid
Haida Raven with Haida
silkscreen on paper
Gift of the Artist
VAG 75.18

Bill Reid
Phyllidula - The Shape of Frogs to Come with Haida, 1984-1985
stain and red cedar
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 86.16

Bill Reid
Haida Eagle with Haida
gouache on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 87.13.1

Bill Reid
Haida Eagle with Haida, 1977-1978
silkscreen and pencil on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 87.13.2

Bill Reid
Haida Eagle with Haida, 1977-1978
silkscreen and pencil on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 87.13.3

Haida Eagle with Haida, 1977-1978
silkscreen and pencil on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 87.13.4

Haida Eagle with Haida
silkscreen on paper
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 87.13.5

Bill Reid
Bear, 1981

Bill Reid
Portrait Mask
cedar and paint
Gift of Takao Tanabe
VAG 98.51

Bill Reid
Children of the Raven
screenprint on paper
Gift of Takao Tanabe
VAG 99.27.5

Bill Reid
Haida Eagle Gut
screenprint on paper
Gift of Takao Tanabe
VAG 99.27.6

Bill Reid
Xhuwaji-Haida Grizzly Bear
screenprint on paper
Gift of Takao Tanabe
VAG 99.27.7

Bill Reid
Haida Bear, Mother & Cub
screenprint on paper
Gift of Takao Tanabe
VAG 99.27.8

Bill Reid
Wolf
graphite on paper
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe
VAG 2002.33.3

Bill Reid
Haida Chief
graphite on paper
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe
VAG 2002.33.4

Bill Reid
Raven Box
metal
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe
VAG 2002.33.5 a-b

Bill Reid
Killer Whale
bronze and glass
Gift in memory of Elizabeth Fellowes Nichol
VAG 2003.5 a-b

Bill Reid
Bear, 1981



Bibliography

This Place: Works from the Collection

Internal Publication

[transcription]

This Place works from the collection

This exhibition presents more than 90 significant works from the permanent collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, organized into three thematic groupings: the land, indigenous cultures and the self as place. The exhibition focuses on important contemporary and historical artworks by British Columbian artists or by artists who have visited British Columbia and addressed these themes.

The first section, on the subject of the land, presents divergent visions of the land produced from the 1880s to the present. With watercolour, printmaking, painting, photography and sculpture, these artists have created an expansive study of rural and urban landscapes of this province.

The second section addresses historical representations of indigenous cultures from the 1920s to mid-century, as well as the growing body of artworks produced by First Nations artists representing their own cultures within the contemporary world.

The third section presents a survey of artworks that examine notions of the self as formed and defined by place. In this instance, the idea of place is more than the physical geography of a region, it is the place formed by diverse histories of immigration, and within generations of beliefs and ideas, or even by historical art produced from this region.

This exhibition is curated by Bruce Grenville, Senior Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Further Reading

Bringhurst, Robert. *The Black Canoe: Bill Reid and the Spirit of Haida Gwaii*. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991.

Bringhurst, Robert ed. *Solitary Raven: Selected Writings of Bill Reid*. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000.

MacDonald, George F. *Haida Monumental Art*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983.

Shadbolt, Doris. *Bill Reid*. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1986.

Tippet, Maria. *Bill Reid: The Making of an Indian*. Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003.

Bill Reid
Bear, 1981

Exhibition History

Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

This Place: Works from the Collection. June 29, 2002 - January 2003.

75 Years of Collecting: British Masters, Group of Seven and Pop Icons.
February 4, 2006 - May 14, 2006.

Description	Condition	Acquired	Disposition	Board Approval
Bill Reid Bear 1981 bronze 7.1 x 7.8 x 6.4 cm				DEC 15 1999
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Archival History

Board Minutes

Acquisition Record
1990-11-30

[transcription of excerpt]

SCHEDULE "A"
Works Recommended for Acquisition

23.

Bear 1981
bronze
7.1 x 7.8 x 6.4 cm

Artist: Bill Reid
Donor: Takao Tanabe

Bill Reid was born in Victoria, B.C. in 1920 of Haida and Scottish parents. He adapted and invented motifs to create an extraordinary range of objects, including jewellery, sculpture, drawing and printmaking, inspired by traditional Haida art. *Bear* features the head of the animal based on traditional Haida design and was conceived as a doorknob, from which Reid translated the idea to produce a bronze edition (25) and a silver edition (25). the addition of *Bear* will be the first bronze by Reid to join the current VAG collection of 12 works—one sculpture, on portrait mask and ten works on paper—and will be a significant addition to the Gallery's modest holdings of the work of this important B.C. artist.

Curatorial comments Recommend acceptance
Committee Disposition Accepted unanimously
Board Approval [DEC 15 1999 in black ink]

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