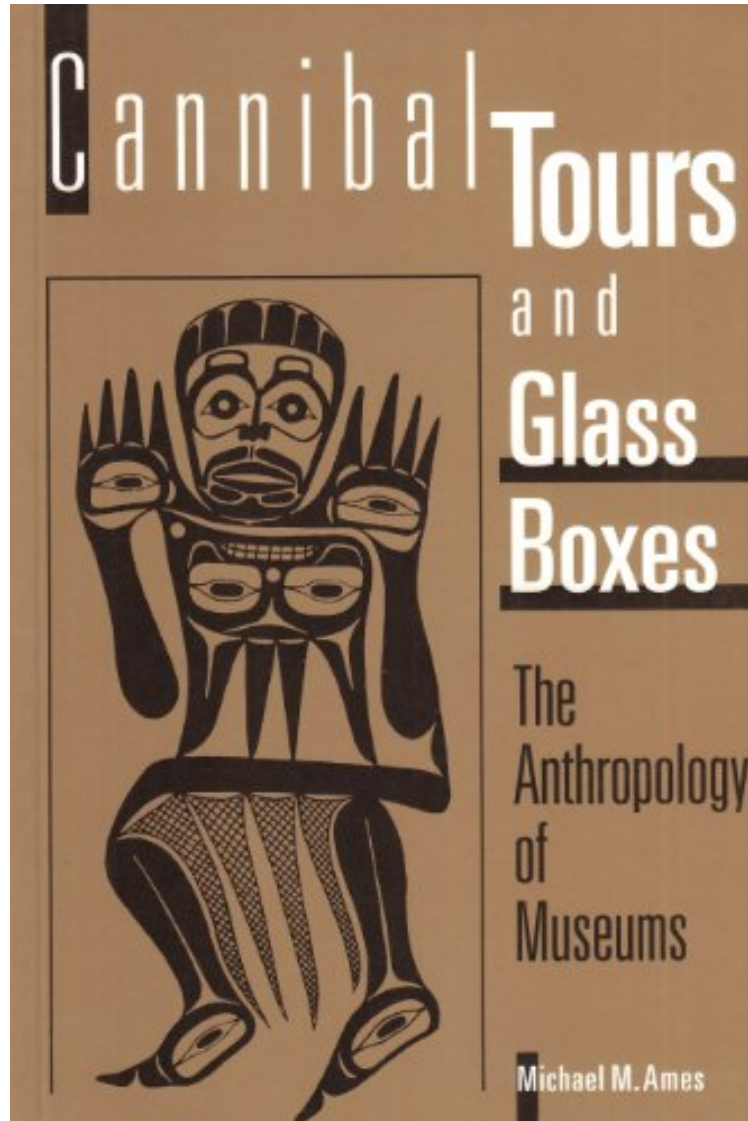


Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums

Michael M. Ames

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Michael M. Ames : Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropolgy of Museums:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The ones I loved as a child were places of wonder with exotic ...By TONY MORPHETTVery interesting book. Museums seem to have changed. The ones I loved as a child were places of wonder with exotic stuff in glass cases and outrigger canoes hanging from the ceiling and a great many shiver-

inducing skulls. These days they've gone all educational and interactive and I think may be losing the sense of wonder. But that's just me. This book is a very good survey.

In *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*, Michael Ames examines the role and responsibility of museums and anthropology in the contemporary world. The author, an internationally renowned museum director, challenges popular concepts and criticisms of museums and presents an alternative perspective which reflects his study of critical social theory and his experience from many years of museum work. Based on the author's previous book, *Museums, the Public and Anthropology*, this edition includes seven new essays which argue that museums and anthropologists must contextualize and critique themselves--that they must analyse and critique the social, political, and economic systems within which they work. In the new chapters, Ames looks at the influence of consumerism and the market economy on museums and in the production of such phenomena as the world's fairs and McDonald's hamburger chains, referring to them as museums of everyday life. He also discusses the moral and political ramifications of conflicting attitudes towards Aboriginal art (art or artefact?), censorship (liberating or repressive?), museum exhibits (informative or disinformative?), and postmodernism (a new theory or an old ideology?). The earlier essays outline the development of museums in the Western world, the problems faced by anthropologists in attempting to deal with the often conflicting demands of professional as opposed to public interests, the tendency to both fabricate and stereotype, and the need to establish a reciprocal rather than exploitative relationship between museums/anthropologists and Aboriginal people. Written during the course of the last decade, these essays offer an accessible, often anecdotal, journey through professional anthropologists' concerns about, and hopes for, his discipline and its future.

This rich, complex, and compelling book represents a forceful scrutiny of the often polarized discourse on museums as well as an attempt to discredit one-sided arguments that prevent subtle and nuanced understandings of these institutions. ? Ames spends a good deal of time challenging the ways people think about, understand, and represent Native art. ? Ames raises interesting and important questions for anthropologists, for art historians, and for museum professionals. ? The struggle for genuine openness to a multitude of voices is by no means over; we should be grateful to Michael Ames for providing us with such a rational and thoughtful publication which represents a major contribution to that struggle. -- Aldona Jonaitis, *Museum Anthropology* "*Cannibal Tours*" has quite a bit to recommend it, and to recommend it to professional and lay readers alike. For the former, it offers some new and eminently practical insights not just about the present and future of museums, but about the relevance of anthropology to late 20th century society. In this sense the book is less true to its current subtitle than to the original "*Anthropology of Anthropology*," and so is deserving of being read as a critical commentary on where the discipline has been, and where it may be heading. And for the latter, Ames's well-written essays explain a good deal of what actually constitutes the work of museums, most importantly the production of those "cultural consumables" meant to inform and entertain the museum-going public. - Barnett Richling, Department of Sociology Anthropology, Mount Saint Vincent University Museum curators, anthropologists, and students of popular culture will find much in "*Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*" to inform and provoke. It will . . . Encourage readers to challenge the common sense of their own particular situations and apply its lessons to the operations of their own institutions. -- Patricia McCormack, "*Alberta Museums*" About the Author Michael M. Ames is director of the Museum of Anthropology and a professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia.