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S'abadeb / The Gifts: Pacific Coast Salish Art and Artists

Barbara Brotherton

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S'abadeb, The Gifts captures the essence of Coast Salish culture through its artistry, oral traditions, and history. Developed in conjunction with the first extensive exhibition of the art and culture of the Coast Salish peoples of Washington State and British Columbia, the book traces the development of Salish art from prehistory to the present. Sculpture in wood, stone, and bone--including monumental house posts--as well as expertly crafted basketry, woven regalia, and contemporary works in glass, print media, and painting showcase a sweeping artistic tradition and its contemporary vibrant manifestations.

S'abadeb is the Lushootseed term for “gifts” and invokes a principle at the heart of Salish sculpture: reciprocity, both in the public and spiritual domains. This richly symbolic word expresses the importance of giving gifts at potlatches, of giving thanks during first food ceremonies, of the creativity bestowed upon artists and other leaders, and of the roles of the master artists, oral historians, and cultural leaders in passing vital cultural information to the next generations. The theme of S'abadeb and practices of reciprocal exchange in Salish society are illuminated here through the intersection of art with ceremony, oral traditions, the land, and contemporary realities.

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