



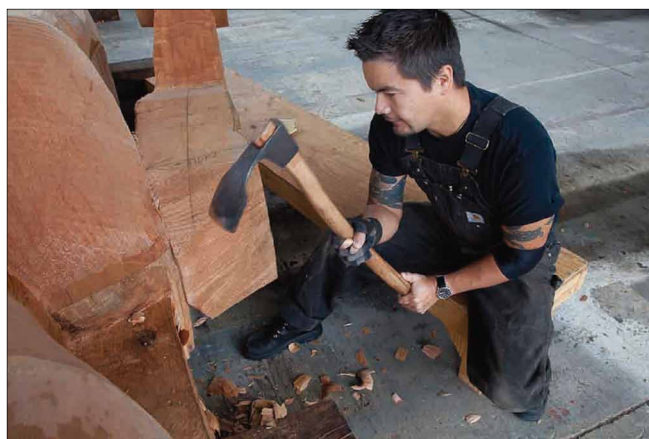
Fórum / The Forum

Following in the Footsteps of the Salish Artist Shaun Peterson in Prague: Demonstration of the Pacific Northwest Art

PO STOPÁCH SALIŠSKÉHO UMĚLCE SHAUNA PETERSONA V PRAZE:
UKÁZKA Z UMĚNÍ INDIÁNŮ AMERICKÉHO SEVEROZÁPADU

Barbora Půtová

Shaun Peterson (born in 1975), a Salish artist from the Pacific Northwest, visited Prague in the week 7–13 October 2013. Shaun Peterson, a member of the Puyallup tribe, carries the name Qwalsius, originally carried by his great grandfather Lawrence Williams. The name has been translated in two possible meanings – the first translation is *Painted Face* and the second *Traveling to the face of Enlightenment*. His stay in Prague was organised in cooperation with the Institute of Ethnology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, and with the support of the US Embassy in Prague. Peterson first had a presentation on Wednesday 9 October at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, at the *Revitalisation, Preservation and Formation of Cultural Identity in Native Americans Conference* that focused on the concept of native identity and how the native Americans could freely develop their traditional culture in modern society that is becoming more and more globalised. Presentations were held on different topics offering a plurality of research perspectives and they contributed to further discussion concerning tradition, modernity, ethnicity and cultural identity. Shaun Peterson had his presentation at the end of the conference. Besides demonstrating how new media are used in Salish art, he also acquainted the audience with traditional forms of Salish art. Contemporary Salish art focuses on production of original artifacts such as masks, totem poles, little boxes, cases, bowls, clothes, amulets, canoes and houses. Their primary medium is wood, followed by glass, concrete or stainless steel. More distinct development can be seen in prints created by the silkscreen and giclée techniques allowing their reproduction in numbers over 100 pieces. The Salish people currently use a wide range of colors.



Contemporary art depicts ovoids, triangles and other pictorial elements in a highly sophisticated manner. Also, Salish art is now dominated by emphasis on three typical features of Northwest native art – formal perfection, symbolic message and expressiveness.

An exhibition of works and photographs by Peterson was officially opened on Wednesday 9 October at Galerie pod schody, the university gallery in Celetná 20. Peterson works are presented in the context of American Northwest art and on the background of history of the Salish peoples inhabiting the mountain regions of the Plateau and Northwest Coast. There are over 70 minority groups divided – on the basis of language family categories – into Coast Salish and Interior Salish. Revitalization, sometimes referred to as the Renais-



sance of Pacific Northwest Coast art and culture, started in the 1960s. Its initiators were, in particular, art theoreticians, anthropologists and – of course – local Indian artists. Salish art did not really return to the Northwest Coast region until the 1980s. Since then, three types of artists can be found there. The first and most active artists are upholders of traditional art. These artists place their works at unconventional places or use unconventional technologies and materials. The second type of artists continues the craft tradition using traditional materials and technologies. The last type includes young contemporary artists whose works refer to traditional art, but their concepts and methods are totally new. At the same time, it remains minimalistic, simple, limited by size and it is an impenetrable iconography that can be understood only as a message of its maker. Artists reflect changes and challenges of their ancestors' original vision in the context of today's world. The most prominent artists today are Susan Point, Joe Wilson, Stan Greene, Marvin Oliver, Dylan Thomas and the central artist and a pivotal figure in the revival of Coast Salish art traditions Shaun Peterson.

On Thursday 10 October, Shaun Peterson held a workshop at the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague, where he presented traditional Salish carving methods together with his artworks including prints, particularly serigraphies and giclée prints, paintings, wooden sculptures and totem poles. Peterson also works with sand-blasted glass that he combines with hand-carved cedar boards. Later

on in his artistic career, he started using other materials and digital print as well as graphic software. Currently, he combines different media and joins traditional materials such as red and yellow cedar with modern materials such as glass, aluminium or steel. Peterson keeps searching for other possibilities where the indigenous art tradition could be used and continues to explore the future possibilities of the art tradition. The work is said to be created to celebrate the past of Native Americans. Peterson's visit to Prague opened the issue of seeking cultural and native identity that may be demonstrated in artwork. Presenting art in public space and returning to Salish traditions, usually intermediated by art, has enabled re-establishing a lost or once forgotten identity. Native art also connects the native people with other local people and gives them all a common identity referring to cultural history of their region. Moreover, several Salish peoples are distinguished by their positive attitude to tourism and their indulgence in commercialization of their original culture and art.

AUTHOR

PhDr. Barbora Pütová, PhD. (Institute of Ethnology, The Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, Celetná 20, 110 00 Praha 1), Czech anthropologist and art historian. In her lectures and research she focuses on Upper Palaeolithic and Neolithic art. She writes about anthropology of art and historical epochs relating to decadence and symbolism of the 19th century.

E-mail: barbora.putova@ff.cuni.cz