

Ethnographic Art, between debate and polemic: J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong's hitherto unpublished manuscript *On Uncivilized Art and Civilized 'Artistry'*¹

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A concise survey of De Josselin de Jong's work

A multi-disciplinarian scholar and probably the most renowned Dutch anthropologist during the first half of the twentieth century in the Netherlands, De Josselin de Jong served as a curator in the departments of Africa, America and Australia at the National Museum of Ethnology² in Leiden (1910-1935). Here he first came across studies on material culture.

Between 1904 and 1910 he studied Dutch Language and Literature. As a student he came into contact with Christianus Cornelius Uhlenbeck,³ whose studies and teaching, both as professor and as Ph.D. supervisor, highly influenced the path De Josselin de Jong would follow. Uhlenbeck had already postulated that the study of Indo-European languages could benefit from results obtained by ethnologists and archaeologists. As a result hereof De Josselin de Jong's thesis combined linguistics and ethnology.⁴

That same year he started to not only deliver reports on the archaeological material originating from the Dutch Antilles, but also to write book reviews and papers, all in all as many as fifty-four between 1912 and 1923. The reviews can be divided into three broad categories: Ethnology: (twenty-nine reviews); Linguistics (twenty reviews), and Archaeology: (five reviews). De Josselin de Jong concentrated on the above fields as a museum anthropologist. His striking knowledge of ethnological theory becomes evident from a lecture published in 1917 entitled *Methods of Modern Ethnology*. As curator he grasped the opportunity in order to popularize the interest for ethnography and ethnographic artefacts by means of

¹ J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, *Over onbeschaafde kunst en beschaafde "kunstzinnigheid". Een ethnologisch onderzoek*. A photocopy of the 81 pp. ms. including nine endnotes is kept at the Library of the National Museum of Ethnology (Museum Volkenkunde) located in Leiden, the Netherlands.

² The National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden has changed its name over the years. For practical reasons, the afore-mentioned name valid from 1935 on will also apply to the preceding period.

³ C.C. Uhlenbeck (1866-1951) was a Dutch professor in Indo-European (then Indo-Germanic) studies, who in later years specialized in comparative and general linguistics.

⁴ This thesis was entitled *The evaluative distinction between Animated and Neuter in Indo-Germanic compared with the same phenomenon in some Algonquian languages*, PhD, Leiden, 1913. To it the subtitle *Ethno-psychological study* was added.

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articles meant for the general public as well as lemmas in an encyclopaedia and a radio lecture. In 1922 he was appointed to the position of an extra-ordinary professor in 'General Ethnology', which in February 1935 was converted into a full professorship in the 'Anthropology of the Netherlands Indies in connection with general anthropology' which he occupied until his superannuation in 1956.

De Josselin de Jong shifted his focus to Indonesia during the 1920s. He became co-founder of structural anthropology in The Netherlands. Aside from French influences (i.e. the sociological school of Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss) this branch of anthropology was rooted in the empirical study of classification systems in Indonesia dating from the nineteenth century on.⁵ Perhaps De Josselin de Jong's most well known study is his *Lévi-Strauss' Theory on Kinship and Marriage*, published in 1952. It presented a masterly summary of the renowned French anthropologist Claude Lévy-Strauss'⁶ major book entitled *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1949) and was complemented with Indonesian material. With this study De Josselin de Jong not only influenced Lévi-Strauss but also attracted international attention among specialists in this field.

The origin of the unpublished manuscript

The polemic introduction and conclusion in the unpublished manuscript from 1920 provided a reaction to the declaration of intent forwarded by the 'Society of Friends of Asiatic Art'. In that sense it formed a direct threat to the survival of the Leiden ethnographic museum to which De Josselin de Jong had dedicated himself for several years, and the collections which he considered to be an essential part of the academic study of ethnology. He wished to put his finger on the pseudo-science and amateurism displayed by a group of people, who were propagating false ideas. These ideas even threatened to divide and destroy ethnographic collections, which for De Josselin de Jong (and for ethnographic museums), constituted the backbone of knowledge and understanding of the 'other peoples'. The afore-mentioned society propagated the idea that ethnic art could sufficiently be understood from an

⁵ The other co-founder is Willem Huibert Rassers (1877-1973), a Dutch ethnologist, curator (1918) and director of the Leiden Museum of Ethnology (1937-1943). By studying the Indonesian shadow play (*wayang*) and the Javanese *keris* Rassers was able to penetrate into classification systems and binary oppositions in Indonesian society to then become a precursor of French structuralism. He introduced De Josselin de Jong to this field. See: Josselin de Jong, P.E. de, and H.F. Vermeulen, 'Cultural Anthropology at Leiden University: From Encyclopedism to Structuralism' in: W. Otterspeer (ed.) *Leiden Oriental Connections, 1850-1940*. Leiden: E.J. Brill/Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1989, 280-316. The scholars referred to here are Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), the French sociologist-cum-philosopher and his nephew Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), the sociologist-cum-anthropologist. The latter's views on the theory and methods of ethnology are thought to have influenced Lévi-Strauss *et al.*

⁶ Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), the renowned French anthropologist.

aesthetic perspective. It may be added here that to this day, this society actively strives to create a better understanding of Asiatic art.⁷

The original publication was intended for the monthly *De Gids* (The Guide) and, according to Gottfried Wilhelm Locher, the editors suspended it due to a [...]

strife over artistic appreciation versus academic understanding. De Josselin de Jong apparently refused to allow the editorial board to publish the article without the introduction and conclusion, which were couched in excellent polemical prose against the artistic trend to which a section of the editorial board felt themselves to be allied.⁸

'He fought against a snobbish appreciation of so-called exotic art on a purely esthetical basis, but he possessed great knowledge in the field of art studies'. In other words De Josselin de Jong was averse to any 'aesthetic show that often was at the expense of professional science'.⁹

This manuscript was the only study of De Josselin de Jong to remain unpublished. It was discovered by the present author when collaborating with Han F. Vermeulen on a new extended bibliography of J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong.¹⁰ In a conversation with his pupil Locher,¹¹ we were informed that after De Josselin de Jong's demise he had received part of the deceased's papers, including this manuscript. Locher opined that this text should reside with A. A. Gerbrands, another of De Josselin de Jong's students, who had specialized on the subject of art in anthropology, and therefore passed it on to him. When asked for a copy of this manuscript, Gerbrands gave his version of how he had obtained it. He claimed to have 'inherited' the copy, adding that he had received it directly from his tutor De Josselin de Jong, since it fitted into his field of interest. The versions presented by Locher and Gerbrands seem to complement each other.

Gerbrands must have had access to the original or a copy thereof including the notes, because he utilised part of it in his dissertation. After his demise the

⁷ In 1952 the Society's collection was housed in the south wing of the Amsterdam *Rijksmuseum*. Here this Society managed its collection independently under the name 'Museum of Asiatic Art' until 1956. Between 1965 and 1972 it gradually evolved into a department of the *Rijksmuseum* with its own curator and own acquisition budget. In 1972 this collection was presented to the *Rijksmuseum* as a long-term loan and placed in the Asiatic Art department.

⁸ G.W. Locher, J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong (13 March 1886-15 November 1964), *Transformation and Tradition and Other Essays*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhof Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land en Volkenkunde, Translation Series, no. 18, 1978 [1965], 36-7.

⁹ Locher 1978:36; J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong en het Leids structuralisme, *Antropologische Verkenningen*, special issue: 'Historische ontwikkelingen in de Nederlandse antropologie', 7: 1/2, 1988, 56.

¹⁰ See Effert, *J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong*, 95-107.

¹¹ G.W. Locher (1908-1997) studied history and ethnology at Leiden University. In 1946 he was appointed as the director of the National Museum of Ethnology (Leiden). Between 1956 and 1973 he officiated as a professor of social anthropology at Leiden University.

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original manuscript with the notes could not be located. Until the present day De Josselin de Jong's article has indeed never been published. Perhaps students left it untouched out of respect for their tutor. Given the polemical introduction and conclusion they may have preferred not to publish it. It is however more likely that research had progressed to such a degree that they did not see fit to use a historic overview of the scientific field as it was in around 1920.

A first reference to the field of ethnographic art

De Josselin de Jong expressed his growing interest in South America as a regional field of study in a series of three articles on Old-Peruvian ceramics kept at the National Museum of Ethnology.¹² In it he observes a stylistic similarity in the ornamentation on textiles, archaeological remains and ceramics, besides the existence of various succeeding cultural periods. He also notices a certain process of degeneration between the earlier and the more recent ceramics, and clearly establishes a magic-religious element in the depictions. In the ornamentation an innovative figuration is observed: the unrecognizable stylized representations of plant and animal figures that might have become pure decorations. In reference to the origin of many geometrical figures from fishes, including ink fishes and starfishes, De Josselin de Jong concludes that realistic depictions often morph into conventional elements, which then merges into other ornamental motives.

When De Josselin de Jong makes a comparison between the rather 'primitive' art of Peru and the 'civilized' art of modern Europe (where he establishes that one is dealing with people whose 'feelings and feeling of shame' differ from ours considerably and therefore cannot be judged according to our norms), he refers indirectly to the ideas of the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art. In this respect he speaks about the 'artist of this cultural level' who distinguishes himself first and foremost as a realist in portraying people and animals, but what the artist reproduced were customary representations that allowed him no liberties.

Felix von Luschan

Another example of his style of reasoning which also fits into this discussion is to be found in De Josselin de Jong's book review of Felix von Luschan's publication on Benin artefacts.¹³ Luschan was one of the first to consider certain aspects of African art as being equal to European art, such as ivory carvings and the technique of casting figures in bronze. De Josselin de Jong argued that students of general ethnology would certainly benefit from Luschan's study. He also added it would speak to those sensitive to the appeal of exotic art, whereby the enthusiasm of the

¹² *Elseviers Geïllustreerd Maandschrift*, 27 September 1917, 1-15; 28 May 1918, 315-25; 29 July 1919, 1-11.

¹³ Felix von Luschan (1854-1924) was a German physician, archaeologist and ethnologist. De Josselin de Jong's Book Review: F. von Luschan, *Die Altertümer von Benin* (Berlin und Leipzig 1919) 3 vols, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, 25: 1/2, 1919, 79-84.

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second and largest group would be looked at with mixed feelings by members of the first group:

The help of real artists and serious students of the history of art will always be highly appreciated by ethnologists, but unfortunately the greater part of those who present themselves as such are pseudo-artists and artistic snobs, a clamorous lot of muddle-headed swaggerers, whose meddlesomeness is annoying and troublesome in the highest degree. However in the long run humbuggery is no match for academic study.

These last remarks were clearly intended as a sneer at the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art.

A concise overview of De Josselin de Jong's reasoning

De Josselin de Jong's main conclusion was that, in order to understand art, the study of aesthetics had to be combined with the study of the culture from which this art originated. A brief survey of his reasoning now follows, as laid down in his study *On uncivilized art and civilized 'artistry'* dating from 1920 and for the first time published in its entirety here.¹⁴

Palaeolithic art and the following phase

By the end of the nineteenth century archaeologists had discovered that naturalistic art was one of the earliest art forms. The art of the cave dwellers in France and Northern Spain certainly indicated a relationship with the art of the Bushmen (now usually referred to as San); however, nothing definitive could yet be said about the antiquity of Palaeolithic art. The only criterion was: the animal paintings of the Bushmen in Southern Africa were more realistic and artistically superior. It seemed as if their drawings of people were less realistic, stiffer and more conventional. Whereas the Bushmen directly derive their art from nature, as they see it in reality while hunting, it is naive and unconditional, rich in format and free from repetition. Later on the sensual motif becomes spiritual. It was assumed that this changing of spiritual influence would lead to the development of more and more magical and animistic images.

The questions were: do the paintings have a religious connotation? What caused the decline of naturalistic art? How to account for degrees of stylization that appeared again and again in decorative motifs? Any research merely shed light on the external course of development, not on the inner causes of this process.

Around 1920 it was already known that in addition to the direct influence of a changing lifestyle on the development of art, indirect factors also played a role, departing from a higher cultural level in general. So-called 'primitive ornamentation' was indeed a fusion of the most heterogeneous elements. The

¹⁴ The present author has introduced headings to this survey.

question was: how did it come about that, in the most primitive societies, ornamentation and naturalistic art never in fact go hand in hand? Primitive and modern naturalism seemed to be different processes. Generally speaking the connection between the rise of civilization and the development of this art form required much more research.

Origin of the geometrical element

Another issue concerned the origin of geometrical ornaments which now and again occur in pre-historic art. It was noted that most societies produced stylized art in one form or another. Archaeologists were the first to formulate the hypothesis that all decorative art was based on the geometrical element, which itself originated from weaving and braiding. This view was based on the fact that the earliest European art displayed a purely geometrical character. However, there was no proof as yet, except that weaving and braiding included certain geometrical ornaments.

The question remained whether the Palaeolithic art in Europe was the earliest art or whether it had evolved from an earlier geometrical style. For this latter hypothesis no proof was found, but several archaeologists still adhered to it. In their view, the South American Indian geometrical figures were not original, but had developed later from long standing decorative motifs, stemming from technique.

Ethnologists have discovered geometrical elements in Brazil, which in reality were simplified depictions of animals and tools. On certain South Sea Islands complicated geometrical ornaments have been encountered which, in reality, were based on immediately recognizable human figures. In Africa especially, lizards frequently appeared as decorative motifs in various stages of stylization. The conclusion was: a process of stylization seemed to be the rule.

To De Josselin de Jong the issue remained that seemingly two kinds of geometrical figures existed: former braid patterns and stylized depictions. Scholars assumed that these had not always been separated from each other, but at a certain time must have become intermingled – a case of 'convergent evolution'. If this rang true, it led to new questions: had there been no connection at all between the primeval forms of these two ornament groups? What was the previous history of the 'representation', which later became a geometrical ornament? Did this in the last instance similarly originate from technique as was presumed – in the same way that more recent, more liberated forms of South American ornamentation had developed from strictly separated geometrical braid patterns? Or was the earliest art we know of perhaps naturalistic? Several scholars held the opinion that the earliest cave art had been preceded by another phase, characterised by means of the simplest carvings into rock, or combined carvings or lines on weapons and household tools, resulting in very simple ornaments. What was the true nature of this, in their view, most primitive art? How did it come into being? Were those drawings considered to be meaningless scribbles, initial expressions perhaps of an artistic urge to create? Or did they have a certain relevance to the maker? And did

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he in this case draw with non-aesthetic ulterior motives? What was the difference if any between magical and profane art?

Technique and naturalism

De Josselin de Jong turned to two aspects: (a) the connection between visual art and technique, and (b) the generic relationship between primitive naturalism and the non-naturalistic types of 'uncivilized art.' As to (a), the question arises: could it be determined if the technical skill, which led to the variations, was applied on purpose or unintentionally and unexpectedly? Indeed with a certain method of braiding in specific circumstances certain geometrical figures would spontaneously emerge in the pattern, but it could not be proven that the braiders would themselves be acquainted with those figures, such as crosses or rectangles. An inspection of objects from other areas indicated that such adornment was so far removed from the characteristic braid technique that a generic link between them would be unthinkable. Moreover, the braid method did not exist in Australia, which meant that the rich geometrical ornamentation could not have originated from here. De Josselin de Jong held the view that the development of art was highly connected with that of technique, without implying that the one necessarily emanated from the other.

Another of De Josselin de Jong's points related to the nature of the Bushmen art and the pre-historic cave art in Europe. A direct transition from 'uncivilized' pre-historic to modern naturalism was nowhere to be observed, and De Josselin de Jong remarked that the art of the primeval Europeans and Bushmen, in spite of all its venerable qualities, gave anything but a modern impression. Moreover, everyone agreed that the servitude of the uncivilized art to a magic-religious act had indeed led to fossilization and conventionalism. De Josselin de Jong suggested a look at similar processes, especially in the field of religion – all the more so, as religion had never been separated from art.

Primitive mentality

De Josselin de Jong pointed to two theories on primitive mentality. The first theory focused on the similarities between the primitive spiritual life and that which it had in common with us, whereas the second theory focused on the numerous, as yet unexplained aspects of primitive mentality. The question was whether the enigmatic character of the uncivilized mentality could also possibly be considered a dual result of two different periods of civilization. That which we considered 'logical' in primitive culture would have adhered to the one period, which is immediately understandable to us. The other period, alien to our modern way of thinking, would have to be qualified as 'post-logical'. There seemed to be an opposition between these two groups, but also a connection. Primitive monotheism originated from the 'logical period', the earliest of the two, as did the earliest naturalistic art and in general the 'logical' element in primitive cultural life. The second, 'post-logical' period produced that which ethnology considered as

characteristically uncivilized and which was indeed found in the spiritual life of the majority of historically uncivilized peoples, albeit in numerous gradations. These two periods were not strictly separated; it had to be a case of a gradual cultural change. However, a more serious objection remained with regard to the vagueness of the characteristics of the two eras. De Josselin de Jong stressed that this was not a process of degeneration, as it was considered to be by Roman Catholic missionaries, who treated the most characteristic features of the uncivilized society as symptoms of moral and intellectual decline. To him it was the result of a psychological fermenting process that could best be compared to the puberty crises in the life of the individual. Both opinions agreed in this respect that another more child-like psychological life must have preceded that period of mental turmoil.

The essence of the problem concerning aesthetics

Notwithstanding all kinds of disagreements, all academic researchers agreed that the enigma, the capriciousness of primitive art, could be largely explained by means of its boundedness. As with the civilisation of which it is an integral part, its art is governed by all kinds of magic-animistic representations to such a degree that it has become instrumental to the practices associated with these representations. Moreover, the personal talent of the artists can never fully develop and therefore falls prey itself to the rigidifying effect of a sacrosanct conventionalism. Thus in primitive society there could be no talk of 'art for art's sake'. It would be very difficult to know if emotions of a purely aesthetic nature had contributed to the artist's frame of mind. From this viewpoint the question arose: to what extent was a purely aesthetic gratification over external appearance compatible with the intense interest in its inner properties? According to De Josselin de Jong, this was the essence of the problem concerning 'primitive' aesthetics.

The threat caused by dissolving ethnographic collections

These events took place amidst a discussion that had begun during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It concerned the future of the Leiden ethnographic museum and really touched De Josselin de Jong. Its contents had increased immensely while adequate housing lagged behind. In addition, the many competitors wishing to transfer this museum from Leiden to Amsterdam or The Hague had threatened the further existence of the academic Museum of Ethnology. An incoming commission founded in 1919, the National Commission for Museums, not only agreed with the views held by the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art, but also published a study named the 'Report of the National Advisory Commission on the Reorganization of all Dutch Museums'. Infuriated by this, De Josselin de Jong wrote a scathing article entitled: 'An attack on the National Museum of Ethnography'.¹⁵ According to the above report the museum was to be changed into an institution

¹⁵ J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong: Een aanslag op 's-Rijks Ethnographisch Museum, *Oudheidkundig Jaarboek* 1: 3, 1921, 133-8.

aiming at the 'ethical education' of the Dutch people. Hereto the commission had distinguished the three most important groups consisting of items of (a) outstanding artistic value, (b) art historical value, and (c) historical value. Next, the collections would have to be regrouped according to the artistic value of the objects, thereby supposedly undergoing a transformation as if by magic from a 'chaotic mass' into an 'organic whole'. These objects of art were then to be transferred to a 'General Museum of Art' in Amsterdam. Part of the 'plundered collection' was to remain in Leiden for educational purposes. The remainder was to be housed in a new ethnographic museum built in The Hague. This would, according to De Josselin de Jong, be nothing but a 'hotchpotch', a 'collection of trash'. He argued that the Commission had not only completely ignored the cultural-historical meaning of ethnographic collections, and he also held the view that these collections 'reflected the state of civilization of a certain section of humanity'. From an ethnographic viewpoint, this comprised an 'unjustifiable mutilation' of the ethnographic collection, which was now degraded to a 'planless cabinet of curiosities'.

As early as in 1883 the Japanese collection acquired by Jan Cock Blomhoff, the former Captain of the trading post Deshima located in the bay of Nagasaki (Japan), had been split up in the same manner. Subsequently the objects of 'art' had been dispatched to Amsterdam and the 'ethnographic' objects to Leiden.¹⁶ Following this, the coherence of this collection was lost forever.

Although this unpublished manuscript has to be seen against the background of this discussion, it also proves De Josselin de Jong's ongoing interest in the field of ethnology, archaeology and art. Fortunately, the plans of the Commission were never carried out. He nonetheless continued to speak of the 'suffering of the National Museum of Ethnology'.

Further involvement with ethnographic art

The year 1920 did not mark the end of De Josselin de Jong's involvement with ethnographic art. This same year, as part of a popular scientific series for an illustrated weekly entitled *Indië*, he published a series on Caribs, Arawaks, Bush-negroes (now usually referred as Maroons) and Creoles. In it he paid attention to rock drawings of the Arawaks assuming these drawings do not stand alone, but can be compared with the interpretation of ornamentation on tools.

In his review of a book by Thomas-Lucien Mainage,¹⁷ De Josselin de Jong returns to the question of whether Palaeolithic art was magical and religious or not, opining that this was certainly not yet established for Bush-negro art. It was also not yet clear whether the Palaeolithic artist actually preferred to draw on inaccessible

¹⁶ R. Effert, *Royal Cabinets and Auxiliary Branches. Origins of the National Museum of Ethnology 1816-1883*, Mededelingen van het Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, no. 37. Leiden: CNWS Publications 2008, 232-4.

¹⁷ For J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong's book review on Th. Mainage, *Les Religions de la préhistoire. L'âge paléolithique* (Paris 1921), see: *Museum, Maandblad voor Philologie en Geschiedenis*, 29:8, 1922, 188-91. Th. L. Mainage (1878-1931) was a French historian.

rock faces, a fact that could also suggest magical practice. Furthermore he pointed out several dissenters (e.g. Leo Frobenius, Max Verworn, George-Henri Luquet, Marcellin Boule etc.),¹⁸ who indicated that the dominating naturalistic character of older Palaeolithic art in particular does not seem to point to a presupposed servitude of this art to magic or religion. De Josselin de Jong did not assume that this art was completely secular. He stated it could not be proven whether this art was totemistic as Salomon Reinach¹⁹ proclaimed, or not. In general De Josselin de Jong objects to assumptions based on only a single find and is always very careful in drawing conclusions – as is again proven in the above-mentioned book review in which he scrutinizes what has been written and traces all lines of reasoning. With his German colleague and friend Karl Theodor Preuss, De Josselin de Jong opined that 'art-loving amateurs who appointed one selves as interpreters of primitive art', and who did not take the trouble to consider this art as part of the entire spiritual and material culture, could never penetrate into the essence of this art. He therefore rejected the increased dabbling in the ethnological science, which was becoming more and more impudent. He also deemed it to be the hackwork for a sensation-seeking public, and something that was permeating the professional literature even more.²⁰

The position of ethnographic art

The sharp distinction De Josselin de Jong draws between 'primitive art' and 'modern art' presents us with a problem. Neither in his work, nor in that of the authors he mentioned, do we find a definition of art. It can be said that he probably did not consider it necessary to provide such a definition as he dealt with aspects of ethnographic artefacts (e.g., naturalism, geometry, ornamentation etc.) in order to reconstruct their development. When defining the 'primitive' artist as an individual working from a position of boundedness, integrated in a society governed by magic-animistic representations, and opining that the personal talent of the artists can

¹⁸ On Frobenius, Verworn and Lévy-Bruhl, see Effert/De Josselin de Jong, this issue; G.H. Luquet (1876-1965) was a French ethnologist and philosopher. He was a student of Lévy-Bruhl and known for his analysis of children's drawings, (cognitive) psychology and the history of religion and art. See especially: *L'art et la religion des hommes fossils*, Paris 1926; M. Boule (1861-1942) was a French palaeontologist, the director of the National Museum of Natural History (Paris) and editor of the journal *L'Anthropologie*. See especially: *Les hommes fossiles. Éléments de paléontologie humaine*, Paris: Masson, 1921.

¹⁹ See S. Reinach, *Cultes, mythes et religions*, Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905. In it, see: 9-29; 79-85 for further information on totemism.

²⁰ For De Josselin de Jong's book review of K.Th. Preuss, *Monumentale vorgeschichtliche Kunst. Ausgrabungen im Quellgebiet des Magdalena in Kolumbien und ihre Ausstrahlungen in Amerika* (Göttingen 1929, 2 vols), see: *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, New Series, 6-47. July-December 1929, 2261-9. P. 2264 and 2268 are referred to here. K.Th. Preuss (1869-1938) was a German ethnologist, a curator at the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin, and a professor at the University of Berlin. Preuss and De Josselin de Jong were both in part philologically schooled and shared similar positions.

never fully develop, De Josselin de Jong concluded that there can be no talk of 'art for art's sake' within primitive society.

This however applies to the modern artist in the same way, because completely 'free art' does not exist. The modern artist cannot work completely unrestrained. He or she not only carries his or her background around but is also led by impressions and thoughts which are also the result of the society from which he or she originates.

The fact that De Josselin de Jong drew a distinction between 'primitive' and 'modern art' is understandable, considering that a group of Dutch art lovers for purely aesthetical reasons distinguished between art and artistry. They had gained influence within the Dutch museum world and threatened, by applying their influence, to divide and reduce the coherent collections of the National Museum of Ethnology, which was and is still based in Leiden. Needless to say, this touched a raw nerve with all professional ethnologists.

Most often, art historians, buyers or lovers of art formulate the intentions that the creator would have had when producing a work of art. These views are found in the descriptions of, the opinions on, and the divisions into, the numerous categories of art work. This can obscure our perception of that which the artist really meant with his/her work. The discussion with regard to ethnographic objects as works of art remains somewhat problematic, as it mainly indicates the artistic traits, rather than their significance within the society from which they originate.

A. A. Gerbrands

It is known that De Josselin de Jong exercised considerable influence on his pupils, expressing himself in their research. In this respect we must consider Adrian Alexander Gerbrands (1917-1997). He was affiliated with the National Museum of Ethnology between 1947 and 1966, initially as scientific assistant, but later as a curator and vice-director. In 1966 he was appointed as a professor of Cultural Anthropology at Leiden University. His thesis and following publications were devoted to the study of art in non-Western societies, especially the Asmat from the south-western part of Dutch New Guinea (now (West) Papua). It was therefore only to be expected that De Josselin de Jong would pass on his ideas on ethnographic art to Gerbrands who was subsequently one of the first to prove the individuality of artists in small-scale societies by way of a study on eight Asmat woodcutters, presenting 'primitive' art with an individual face.

In his dissertation entitled *Art as an Element of Culture, Especially in Negro-Africa*²¹, Gerbrands points to the importance of the function of art in a given society, examining its in terms of its religious, social, political, economic, technological, linguistic, frivolous and aesthetic aspects. European artists and art lovers have

²¹ A.A. Gerbrands, *Kunst als cultuur-element, in het bijzonder in Neger-Afrika*, 's Gravenhage: Excelsior 1956. PhD thesis Leiden, translated as *Art as an Element of Culture Especially in Negro Africa*. Mededelingen van het Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, no. 12, 1957. See also: *Wowipits, eight Asmat wood-carvers of New Guinea*, Den Haag: Mouton, 1967.

occupied themselves with this final aspect since the beginning of the twentieth century, not acting as if they wish to penetrate the nature and the contents of that art. Form and content of a work of art go together. Moreover, a work of art hailing from an exotic culture cannot be experienced in the same manner as a work of art originating from its own culture. If one is only satisfied with the work in terms of its aesthetic pleasure, it is not done any justice. A work of art has the right to be situated against the background of the culture from which it stems. Gerbrands makes no fundamental distinction between 'outer-European' art and European art. In comparison, tradition plays a larger role with the former, although the aesthetical value is appreciated also. In addition, various styles can be found. There is also a difference in talent among artists. Exotic cultural elements can be incorporated. And, by means of contact with the West equally 'lifeless stuff for the tourist trade' has come into being. To Gerbrands essential differences are therefore at most gradual differences. He presumes the aesthetic creative process develops similarly in every artist. A definition of art, as Gerbrands formulated it, is presented here:

When a creative individual gives to cultural values a personal interpretation in matter, movement or sound, of such a nature that the forms, which result from this creative process comply with the standards of beauty valid in this society, then we call this creative process, and the forms resulting therefrom *art*.²²

Thanks to the solid source investigations and its multi-disciplinarian character (ethnology, archaeology, psychology, art history), this study entitled *On uncivilized art and civilized 'artistry'* by De Josselin de Jong still remains valid. It is to be regretted that during the 1920s it was not able to play a role in the national Dutch debate on art and artistry, since it could have provided the grounds for a scholarly discussion between ethnologists, archaeologists, and art-lovers. As a fine piece of razor-sharp polemical prose, and as an overview of the development of ethnic art, the present publication is definitely worth reading, even today.

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²² Gerbrands, *Art as an Element of Culture*. On 'lifeless stuff for the tourist trade', see: 1957, 130 and for the definition of art, 1957, 139.