

Sepik Ramu Art

Edited by Kevin Conru

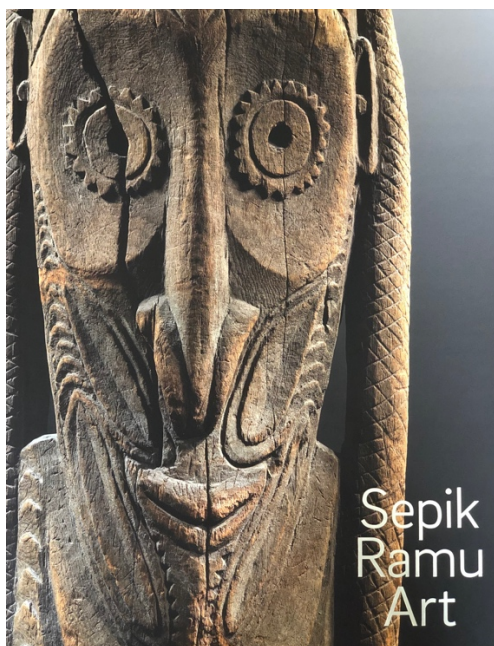
296 pages illustrating 170 objects from three private collections

Photographs by Hughes Dubois

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Once a vast inland sea, the flood plain of the Sepik and Ramu river systems in Papua New Guinea remains one of the most pristine on the planet. The people of the Sepik-Ramu area, representing a large part of the over 700 different linguistic groups that live on the earth's second-largest island, have in that tranquil environment created an outstanding oeuvre of art that is a truly important part of humanity's cultural heritage. All facets of their lives, both secular and spiritual, were imbued with creativity that knew no bounds. Magnificent house structures were embellished with totemic carvings of wood and fibre, masks and statues were made to intercede with the ancestral worlds, and objects of everyday mundanity were decorated with highly imaginative visual patterning. They guarded their sacred objects for generations, until the arrival of Christianity and external trade, and so what has been passed down and is now presented in this book represents some of the most profound art creations known to us. This volume, edited by Kevin Conru, presents many previously unpublished masterpieces coming from historical Low Country collections, and the nearly 200 pieces selected are representative of the enormous scope of art made in the region. A survey of early photography from the Sepik-Ramu is presented by Virginia-Lee Webb, and a discussion of masks and figures from the lower reaches of the two rivers is undertaken by Crispin Howarth. Barry Craig, who first undertook fieldwork in Papua New Guinea in 1964, has narrated the progression of illustrations as one who has studied the wider Sepik-Ramu region both in depth and in situ. And all the artworks presented have been lavishly photographed by Hughes Dubois.



Introduction by Kevin Conru

Specialist in Oceanic Art | author

Virginia-Lee Webb

Ph.D., AAA | former Research Curator at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Layers of Light : Twentieth-Century Photographs of Sculpture, Architecture, and the People of the Sepik River

Crispin Howarth

Curator Pacific Art at The National Gallery of Australia
Brag Masks and Kandimbong Figures : Two Sculptural Arts of the Sepik-Ramu Delta

Barry Craig

Ph.D. | author

New Bends for an Old River