



Malanggan: Art, Memory and Sacrifice (Materializing Culture)

Susanne Küchler

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Shortlisted for the Katharine Briggs Folklore Award 2003

Malanggan are among the most treasured possessions in the Pacific, yet they continue to confound anthropologists. Central to funerals in New Ireland, these 'death' figures are intended to decompose as symbolic representations of the dead. Wrapped in images that are conceived of as 'skins', they are both visually complex and intriguing. This book is the first to interpret these mysterious agents of resemblance and connection as having a cognitive rather than a linguistic basis.

Found in nearly every ethnographic museum in the world, Malanggan collections have been left virtually untouched. This original study begins by tracing the history of the collections and moves on to consider the role these artefacts play in sacrifice, ritual and exchange. What is the relationship between Malanggan and memory? How can Malanggan be understood as a life force as well as a vehicle for thought? In an analysis of the cognitive aspects of Malanggan, Küchler offers a highly original conceptualization of the centrality of the knot as a mode of being, thinking and binding in the Pacific.

Malanggan: Art, Memory and Sacrifice is a groundbreaking study. Based on fifteen years of fieldwork and collection research, it provides an incisive new take on one of the Pacific's classic puzzles, as well as a wealth of new information and resources for anthropologists, collectors and curators alike.

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