

The Art of Oceania  
Art 244 Fall 2012

Common Characteristics of Traditional Art of Oceania:

1. Developed regionally with many distinct cultures, belief systems, rituals and art styles.
2. Materials vary greatly across the region and each culture utilizes their specific materials for art and architecture in unique ways.
3. Major purpose is religious, for rituals, and includes oratory, poetry, dance and music
4. Artworks enable Pacific Islanders to interact with supernatural forces and operate their societies
5. Many Pacific Islanders believe that the human body is the meeting place of the everyday world of man and the divine world of the ancestors and the gods.

Common Spiritual Beliefs of Oceania

1. Two spiritual ideas are central to the majority of people in Oceania:
  - a. *Mana* – sacred power in individuals, works of art and a wide variety of objects.
  - b. *Marae* – sacred places with large amounts of *mana*. These are focal points for rituals dedicated to the gods and ancestors.
2. People acquire *mana* through lineage and skillful and courageous deeds.
3. *Mana* can be decreased through cowardice or enslavement.
4. *Mana* in artworks comes from the materials, artist, quality of workmanship and care and correctness of rituals preceding work.

Sources: *Art Beyond The West*, By Michael O’Riley, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 2002  
*Art History A View of the World: Part Two* by Marilyn Stokstad and  
Michael W. Cothren, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2011