

# ARTTRIBAL

*les arts premiers magazine*

ISSUE 3,4 APRIL 2012

THE LAST  
PRIVATELY HELD  
OBJECT FROM  
CAPTAIN COOK'S  
COLLECTION

## GAUGUIN POLYNESIA

AN ELUSIVE PARADISE • SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

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# THE LAST PRIVATELY HELD OBJECT FROM CAPTAIN COOK'S COLLECTION DONATED TO UBC MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY



Nootka Ceremonial Club view 2, Bill McLennan photo, UBC MOA

On Tuesday March 20th Art Tribal, Les Arts Premiers Magazine attended a press conference at the UBC Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver for an unveiling of an important donation.

The object of global historical and cultural significance, received by explorer Captain James Cook from a Canadian First Nation during his final voyage (1776-1779), was donated to the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology (MOA) by a leading arts philanthropist.

The object, a rare Nootka ceremonial club was sold to Michael Audain, chairman of the Audain Foundation for \$1.2 million by Donald Ellis at the New York Winter Antique Show last January (pictured right - photo David Cassera).

"This ceremonial club has immense historical and cultural value. I am delighted to play a part in its return to Canada's west coast," says Michael Audain, chairman of the Audain Foundation for the Visual Arts, and one of Canada's most active arts supporters. "While certain Nuuchahnulth objects

collected by Cook exist in museums abroad – for example, in London, Berlin, and Vienna – this is the first and only in Canada. With our Foundation's donation, I hope to encourage the repatriation of other Northwest Coast art works to public museums and cultural centres in British Columbia."

Misattributed in some historical documents as a "curious war instrument" from the "Sandwich Isles" (Hawaii), the club was carved by an Aboriginal Northwest Coast artist as early as the mid-1700s, placing it within the last generation of traditional objects created before European contact.

Considered the oldest known and most finely executed club of this style, it is carved from yew wood in the shape of a hand holding a sphere. It may have been both a ceremonial symbol of its owner's high rank and a functional tool or weapon.



On Cook's final voyage, his third to the Pacific, the explorer sailed the HMS Resolution to Hawaii (1776-1777) and became the first European to set foot on the Northwest Coast when he arrived at B.C.'s Nootka Sound on March 28, 1778. After sailing north in search of the Northwest Passage, Cook returned to Hawaii, where he was killed in 1779.

Like much of Cook's personal collection,

the club found its way from his family into the private Leverian Museum in London, where it was sold in 1806, passing through several private collections in Britain and the United States until it was obtained by the Audain Foundation and returned to B.C.

"We welcome the homecoming of this great gift by the Audain Foundation—a treasure once given by our people to Captain James Cook, and now returned to us to share with the people of Canada and those who come to visit," says Margarita James, President of the Land of Maquinna Cultural Society, speaking on behalf of Mowachaht hereditary chief Yahua, Michael Maquinna, and Muchalaht hereditary chief Norman George. "The Mowachaht-Muchalaht First Nation, one of 15 nations comprising the Nuuchahnulth people, greeted and hosted Captain James Cook in 1778 at Yuquot (Friendly Cove), Nootka Sound. As our Council of Chiefs said in 1997:

"Many of the early visitors were anxious to take home our gifts as souvenirs of their time among us. As part of our diplomacy, we presented carved images of our great ancestors to representatives of European governments visiting our territory. These ancestors are now living in your great treasure houses, which you call museums. They are our representatives in your cities and capitols. They are your acknowledgement of our diplomacy and the greatness of our nation. They are our boundary markers showing the extent of our influence throughout the world."

"Thanks to the Audain Foundation and the Mowachaht-Muchalaht and Nuuchahnulth First Nations, this important artifact will be a catalyst for new research and thinking on both the object itself and its global journey," says Anthony Shelton, MOA director.

The club will be displayed at MOA in its Multiversity Galleries, which house more than 10,000 objects from around the world. Learn more at [www.moa.ubc.ca](http://www.moa.ubc.ca).

# ART TRIBAL CALENDER

## NYC **tribalART** Show 2012

10TH - 13TH MAY 2012

BOHEMIAN NATIONAL HALL  
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## NYC TRIBAL ART WEEK

**May 7-13, 2012**

## AFTER AUCTION **PARTY**

**FRIDAY MAY 11**  
FROM 4 - MIDNIGHT

BOHEMIAN NATIONAL HALL-  
ROOFTOP TERRACE

## MUSEUMS

Gauguin and Polynesia  
Seattle Art Museum  
Through 4/29/12

The Coe Collection of American Indian Art  
New York Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Through 10/14/12

Embodying the sacred in Yoruba Art  
Kean Galleries at Kean University, Union Township, NJ  
Through 4/18/12

Exploring Art of The Ancient Americas  
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore MD  
Through 5/20/12

Global Perspectives: Art History at a Glance  
Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, OH  
Through 5/12/12

## UPCOMING AUCTIONS

**DOROTHEUM: Tribal Art auction**  
Wien , Austria  
4/2/12

**SOTHEBY'S - Masterpieces of African Art from the Collection of the Late Werner Muensterberger & African, Oceanic and Pre-Columbian Art including Property from the Lerner, Shoher and Vogel Collections**  
New York  
5/11/12

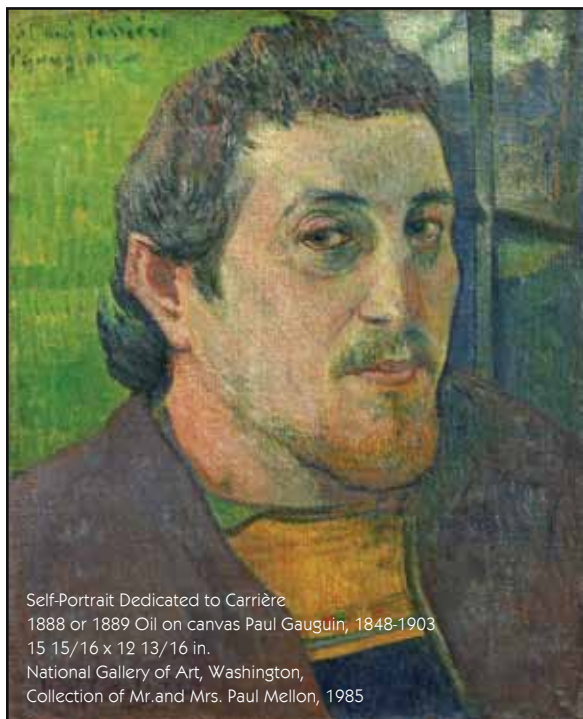
**BONHAMS - African, Oceanic and Pre-Columbian Art**  
New York  
5/12/12



# GAUGUIN AND POLYNESIA

## AN ELUSIVE PARADISE - SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

### GAUGUIN'S LIFE



Eugène Henri Paul Gauguin (7 June 1848 – 8 May 1903) was a leading French Post-Impressionist artist, who was not well appreciated until after his death. Gauguin was later recognized for his experimental use of colors and synthetist style that was distinguishably different from Impressionism.

His work was influential to the French avant-garde and many modern artists, such as Pablo Picasso, and Henri Matisse. Gauguin's art became popular after his death and many of his paintings were in the possession of Russian collector, Sergei Shchukin. He was an important figure in the Symbolist movement as a painter, sculptor, print-maker, ceramist, and writer. His bold experimentation with coloring led directly to the Synthetist style of modern art while his expression of the inherent meaning of the subjects in his paintings, under the influence of the cloisonist style, paved the way to Primitivism and the return to the pastoral. He was also an influential

proponent of wood engraving and woodcuts as art forms.

Gauguin was born in Paris, France and in 1849 the family left Paris for Peru. It was in Lima that Gauguin encountered his first art. His mother admired Pre-Columbian pottery; She collected Inca pots that some colonists dismissed as barbaric.

In 1871, Gauguin returned to Paris where he secured a job as a stockbroker. His mother's very rich boyfriend, Gustave Arosa, got him a job at the Paris Bourse; Gauguin was twenty-three. He became a successful Parisian businessman and remained one for eleven years. In 1873, he married a Danish woman, Mette-Sophie Gad. Over the next ten years, they had five children. His middle-class family and marriage fell apart after 11 years when Gauguin was driven to paint full-time. He returned to Paris in 1885, after his wife and her family asked him to leave because he renounced the values they shared.



Arearea no Varua ino  
(Words of the Devil, or Reclining Tahitian Women)  
1894 Oil on canvas Paul Gauguin, 1848-1903  
23 5/8 x 38 9/16 in.  
Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

Like his friend Vincent van Gogh, with whom in 1888 he spent nine weeks painting in Arles, Paul Gauguin experienced many bouts of depression and at one time attempted suicide. He traveled to Martinique in search of an idyllic landscape and worked as a laborer on the Panama Canal construction; he was dismissed from his job after only two weeks.

In 1891, Gauguin sailed to French Polynesia to escape European civilization and "everything that is artificial and conventional". He wrote a book titled *Noa Noa* describing his experiences in Tahiti. There have been allegations by modern critics that the contents of the book were fantasized and plagiarized.

Gauguin left France again on 3 July 1895, never to return. His time away, particularly in Tahiti and Hiva Oa Island, was the subject of much interest both then and in modern times due to his alleged sexual exploits. He was known to have had trysts with several prepubescent native girls, some of whom appear as subjects of his paintings.

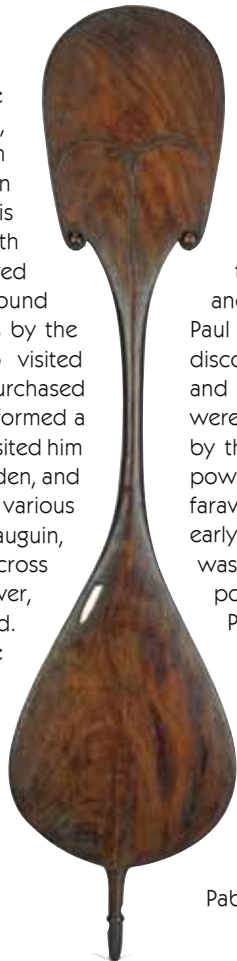


Manao Tupapau (Watched by the Spirits of the Dead)  
1894, Lithograph, feather, pencil and wash, Paul Gauguin, 1848-1903,  
13 11/16 x 16 15/16 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art:  
The Louis E. Stern Collection, 1963

**"I'm leaving so that I can be at peace and can rid myself of civilization's influence. I want to create only simple art. To do that, I need to immerse myself in virgin nature, see only savages, live their life, with no other care than to portray, as would a child, the concepts in my brain using only primitive artistic materials, the only kind that are good and true." (Paul Gauguin before leaving for Tahiti February 23, 1891)**

## ARTISTIC CAREER

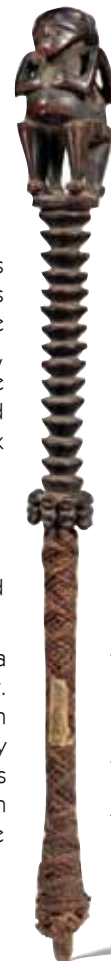
In 1873, around the same time as he became a stockbroker, he started becoming an artist too. Gauguin began painting in his free time. His Parisian life centred on the 9th arrondissement. Gauguin lived at 21 rue la Bruyère. All around were the cafés made famous by the Impressionists. Gauguin also visited galleries frequently and purchased work by emerging artists. He formed a friendship with Pissarro and visited him on Sundays, to paint in his garden, and Pissarro introduced him to various other artists. In 1877 Gauguin, "moved downmarket and across the river to the poorer, newer, urban sprawls" of Vaugirard. Here, on the third floor at 8 rue Carcel, he had the first home in which he had a studio. He showed paintings in Impressionist exhibitions held in 1881 and 1882 and over two summer holidays, he painted with Pissarro and occasionally Paul Cézanne.



## GAUGUIN & PRIMITIVISM

Primitivism was an art movement of late 19th century painting and sculpture; characterized by exaggerated body proportions, animal totems, geometric designs and stark contrasts. The first artist to systematically use these effects and achieve broad public success was Paul Gauguin. The European cultural elite discovering the art of Africa, Micronesia, and Native Americans for the first time were fascinated, intrigued and educated by the newness, wildness and the stark power embodied in the art of those faraway places. Like Pablo Picasso in the early days of the 20th century, Gauguin was inspired and motivated by the raw power and simplicity of the so-called Primitive art of those foreign cultures.

Gauguin is also considered a Post-Impressionist painter. His bold, colorful and design oriented paintings significantly influenced Modern art. Artists and movements in the early 20th century inspired by him include Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, André



Derain, Fauvism, Cubism and Orphism, among others. Later he influenced Arthur Frank Mathews and the American Arts and Crafts Movement.

John Rewald, an art historian focused on the birth of Modern art, wrote a series of books about the Post-Impressionist period, including *Post-Impressionism: From Van Gogh to Gauguin* (1956) and an essay, *Paul Gauguin: Letters to Ambroise Vollard and André Fontainas* (included in Rewald's *Studies in Post-Impressionism*, 1986), discusses Gauguin's years in Tahiti, and the struggles of his survival as seen through correspondence with the art dealer Vollard and others.

Left: Dance paddle (rapa)  
Late 18th century-mid 19th century  
Wood, 32 3/16 x 7 11/16 in.  
Easter Island  
The Trustees of the British Museum

Right: Fly whisk handle  
Late 18th century-early 19th century  
Wood, coir  
11 1/8 in.  
Austral Islands  
On loan from Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service





Head ornament (pa'e kaha),  
Early-mid 19th century  
Coconut palm fiber, turtle shell, clam shell  
Marquesas Islands  
18 11/16 in.  
The Trustees of the British Museum

## THE ELUSIVE PARADISE



By 1500 BC, Polynesian people had begun their epic voyage across the central and eastern Pacific Ocean to settle in what is now known as the Polynesian triangle – a journey that would take European explorers another thousand years to complete. By the time French explorers arrived in the 18th century, Polynesian culture had reached a level of “voluptuousness,” as noted by explorer Antoine-Louis de Bougainville and as evidenced in the works in Gauguin and Polynesia. Polynesian artists developed an evocative aesthetic system which can be seen in patterned wood carvings, ceremonial attire, intricately decorated weapons, and exceptional tattooing. For example, the exhibition includes a Pa'e Kaha from the early- to mid-19th century in the Marquesas Islands. Meant to adorn the head, the most sacred part of the body, this piece includes turtle shell panels that were skillfully curved by wrapping them in leaves and heating them over a fire, and then carved before affixing them to a band of woven coconut palm along with panels of white clam shell.

When Paul Gauguin arrived in Papeete, Tahiti in June 1891, he expected to find himself immersed in just such a “voluptuous” culture, a paradise of gentle populations set in nature’s abundance. In fact, what he found was a local culture that had been in decline for more than a century, due to disease, famine, warfare and a prohibition on traditional art forms enforced by the Catholic Church, along with the difficult dealings of a colonial bureaucracy much like that he had left behind in France.

Deeply disappointed at finding so much of what he had sought to escape and so little of the paradise he had expected, Gauguin enacted his own, restless search for Polynesian art, and introduced his imperfect notions of Polynesian religion and culture into the works of art he sent back to Europe. Gauguin and Polynesia balances examples of his interpretation of Tahitian and Marquesan culture with the Polynesian side of the story, presenting art forms that illustrate what he was seeing and providing reflection on what he was not able to comprehend.

Vahine no te Tiare (Tahitian Woman with a Flower)  
1891, Oil on canvas, Paul Gauguin, 1848-1903  
27 3/4 x 18 5/16 in., Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

Tiki  
19th century  
Wood  
Marquesas Islands  
40 9/16 in.  
Collection of the Musée de la Castre,  
Cannes





## SEATTLE ART MUSEUM IS THE ONLY U.S. VENUE FOR GAUGUIN AND POLYNESIA: AN ELUSIVE PARADISE

Seattle Art Museum (SAM) presents the only United States stop for Gauguin and Polynesia: An Elusive Paradise, a landmark show highlighting the complex relationship between Paul Gauguin's work and the art and culture of Polynesia.

The exhibition, on view February 9 through April 29, 2012, includes nearly 60 of Gauguin's brilliantly hued paintings, sculptures and works on paper, which are displayed alongside 60 major examples of forceful Polynesian sculpture. Organized by the Art Centre Basel the show is comprised of works on loan from some of the world's most prestigious museums and private collections.

Gauguin and Polynesia includes a gallery of Polynesian sculptures similar to those that Gauguin would have seen at the World's Fair. The Moai Kavakava or Cadaverous Male figure, for example, carved of wood and inset with obsidian and bone, represents an evocative art form that had largely disappeared by the time Gauguin reached the South Pacific. The mysterious figure-type, possibly meant to be "inhabited" by an influential ancestor, directly influenced Gauguin's work, as evidenced in his Christ on the Cross, carved in wood in 1894. Gauguin and Polynesia includes a rubbing made of the sculpture by a friend of Gauguin and published many years after his death.

## CRITICS REVIEW

From the perspective of this publication who's primary focus is tribal art, the exhibition Gauguin and Polynesia is a breathtaking look into a large grouping of objects from the world's best collections. With that being said it was very difficult to focus attention on the actual paintings by Gauguin.

The paintings essentially took a "back seat" to the magnificence of the tribal objects on view. Overall the exhibition was exciting and fresh but the level of tribal art seemed to far surpass the paintings of Gauguin which seemed almost mediocre in comparison.

However it is very important to remember from a art history perspective that through Gauguin's art he developed a revolutionary visual language crucial to the development of 20th century art. Symbolism, Primitivism, Expressionism and Abstraction would be almost unheard of without his body of work.

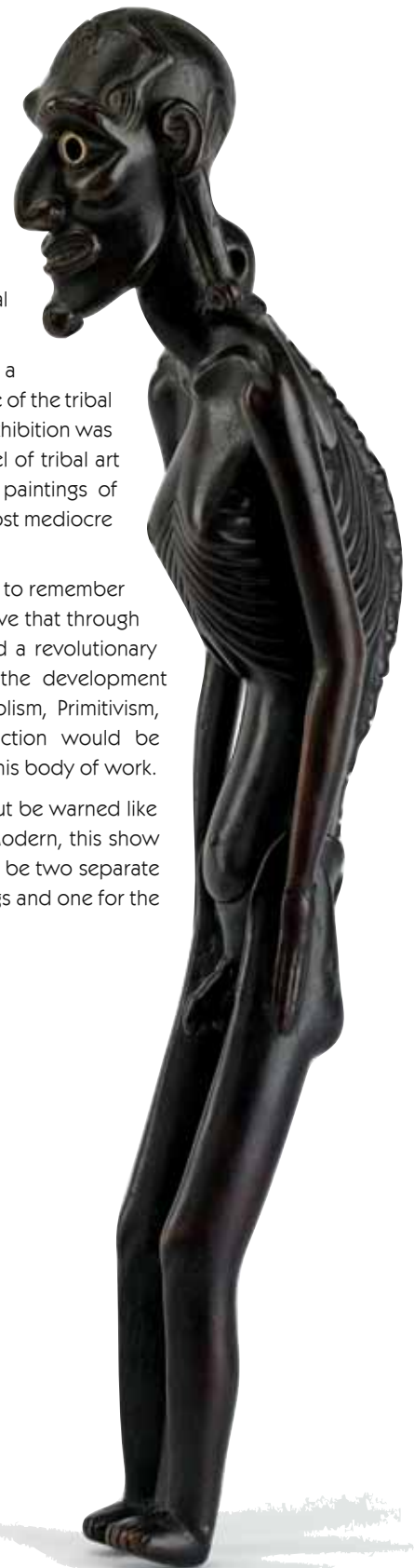
Over all I loved this show but be warned like the Gauguin show at Tate Modern, this show is huge. There should in fact be two separate reviews, one for the paintings and one for the tribal art!



Double figure  
Late 18th century-early 19th century  
Wood  
Society Islands, Tahiti  
24 x 22 13/16 in.  
The Trustees of the British Museum



Oval bowl on small feet (kumete),  
ca. 1865, Wood, haliotis shell  
New Zealand, 11 x 7 1/2 x 7 in.  
Wero Taroi of Ngati Tarawhai for Gilbert Meir



Standing male figure (Moai kavakava)  
Late 18th century-mid 19th century  
Wood, bone, red ochre  
Easter Island  
16 15/16 in.  
The Trustees of the British Museum



Japanese boxwood  
okimono depicting  
Ashinaga and  
Tenaga, Meiji Period  
(1868-1912)

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