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MarketINSIGHT

# SOTHEBY'S OFFERS "A NEW YORK COLLECTION" IN PARIS

On November 30th 2010, Sotheby's Paris will offer 49 exceptional African Art lots from a New York Collection. Lot 27 A MAGNIFICENT FANG HEAD, GABON (below) that was part of the prestigious collection sold at auction on the 9th of November 1965 in Paris (Ancienne collection Paul Guillaume - Art Nègre, hôtel Drouot). which boasts a pre-sale estimate of 500,000 - 700,000 EUR (\$682,299 - \$955,219).



image courtesy of Sotheby's

Another important object to watch is lot 33 A RARE AND IMPORTANT MUMUYE FIGURE, NIGERIA (right) with a pre-sale estimate of 180,000 - 250,000 EUR (\$245,627 - \$341,149)

Immediately following there will be a sale consisting of 103 lots of African and Oceanic material.

## A NEW YORK COLLECTION

I started collecting in the late 1970s. What drew me to African art I think was a love of the material—woods with smooth or weathered surfaces; rich dark patinas; images that were sometimes beautiful idealized portraits but other times intensely expressionistic, images that challenged the imagination and invited

investigation of another aesthetic universe that had influenced the most important European artists earlier in the century.

In New York in those days, the places to see African art were clustered around 57th St. and along Madison Avenue north towards the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which had not yet opened its Michael C. Rockefeller Wing for the art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas.

Similarly, the Museum for African Art was a few years in the future. An amateur of African art therefore depended on the private galleries and dealers who abounded in the city. Pace Primitive almost always had a catalogued exhibition or newly arrived material to show, and on a crisp autumn Saturday, I would head to their space, then as now, on East 57th St. It bustled with activity, visited not only by African collectors but also by artists and collectors of modern and contemporary art looking for a provocative piece of tribal art and often escorted by Arne Glimcher himself. Bryce Holcombe, the director, was a character and raconteur, and it was easy to pass an entire morning in his company while he pulled out wonderful objects for consideration, like the delicate Senufo hornbill mask. From the exhilaration of Pace, I headed across the street to the quieter precincts of the Fuller Building and Gaston de Havenon's gallery. The ever-charming de Havenon had endless stories of Paris and the amazing collection he had amassed while travelling to France on business in the 1950s and 1960s. He was always generous with his time and encouraged my interest. The small Kongo fetish and astonishing Guro mask with standing figure that once belonged to Louis Carre came from those visits to de Havenon's gallery.

Walking north on Madison Avenue, the education would continue at the old Parke Bernet Gallery if there happened to be a sale exhibition, or at Freddie Rolin's storefront

gallery near 78th Street. On a slow day, the aristocratic owner or his staff would take me to the downstairs storeroom to engage in some "basement archaeology," spending hours digging around treasures I did not yet fully appreciate. I learned. There were large Luba and Hemba ancestor figures, an amazing Kongo dog fetish, masks from Zaire,

ivories from Nigeria. This is where I discovered the elegantly attenuated Mumuye figure, the Picasso-esque Ngbaka spoon, the Urhobo shrine that once belonged to Arman—who I often saw in the gallery—and the strong and beautiful Pende mask. These are the kinds of objects you could find in those days, at prices a beginning collector could afford. (One day, checking out Rolin's walk-in safe at the back of the gallery, I discovered and immediately bought a late 7th century Indian Gupta bronze Buddha, which today is owned jointly by the Victoria and Albert and British museums.) Nearby was C & M Arts, where blue-chip postwar artworks and museum-quality exhibitions for artists like Jackson Pollock and de Kooning shared space with a handful of masterworks of African art, like the archaic Djennanke ancestor figure, which reminds me of a bust of a Gothic king or saint from the period. Further up Madison, Helene and Philippe Leloup had established a New York gallery, where I spent many enjoyable hours in conversation with this wonderful couple who became mentors and dear friends. It was there I found treasures like the Songye shield and the rare Owo ivory bowl. Across the street Merton Simpson held court in his masterpiece-laden gallery. In the side streets off Madison could be found other important dealers from America and Europe, who would show great objects in small galleries, private apartments or hotel rooms. It was a golden age for looking at and buying African art in New York.



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# MAN RAY, AFRICAN ART AND THE MODERNIST LENS

## AN EXHIBITION FEATURING RECENTLY DISCOVERED PHOTOGRAPHS AND REUNITING IMAGES WITH ORIGINAL OBJECTS



Man Ray, Untitled (Bamileke figure, njuindem, "Bangwa Queen," Bangwa Kingdom, Cameroon), c. 1934 © 2010 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

An exhibition featuring recently discovered photographs and reuniting images with original objects both on view at Vancouver's MOA through January 23, 2011.

The Museum of Anthropology is pleased to announce *Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens*, a ground breaking exhibition exploring the pivotal role of photography in changing the perception of African objects from artifacts to fine art. *Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens* will be on view at MOA from October 29, 2010 through January 23, 2011.

*Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens* brings to light photographs of African objects by American artist Man Ray (1890-1976) produced over a period of almost twenty years. In addition to providing fresh insight into Man Ray's photographic practice, the exhibition raises questions concerning the representation, reception, and perception of African art as mediated by the camera lens.

Featured are more than 50 photographs by Man Ray from the 1920s and 1930s alongside approximately 50 photographs by his international avant-garde contemporaries

such as Charles Sheeler, Walker Evans, Alfred Stieglitz, and André Kertész. For the first time, a number of these photographs are presented alongside the original African objects they feature. The juxtaposition offers a rare opportunity to encounter first-hand how various photographic techniques of framing, lighting, camera angle, and cropping evoke radically different interpretations of these objects. Books, avant-garde journals, and popular magazines also on display illustrate how these photographs circulated and promoted ideas about African art and culture to an international audience.

Curated by Wendy Grossman, the exhibition frames the objects and images within diverse contexts, including the Harlem Renaissance, Surrealism, and the worlds of high fashion and popular culture.

*Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens* was curated by Wendy Grossman, Ph.D. and organized by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC. The exhibition was funded in part by grants from the Terra Foundation for American Art, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Dedalus Foundation. Media sponsor The Georgia Straight. Opening reception sponsored by Consulat General de France a Vancouver.

**A new exhibit at the Museum of Anthropology shows how Man Ray and his peers looked to pre-industrialized cultures for inspiration**

By Robin Laurence

Sometimes nature delivers exactly the right metaphor at exactly the right moment. At the University of British Columbia, on what feels like the last clear day of the season, a cold, white mist rises from the Strait of Georgia. It wraps itself around the Museum of Anthropology, blurring the building's modernist outlines, smudging its sharp angles, enshrouding it in mystery. The exhibition that runs from Friday (October 30) to January 23, 2011, *Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens*, blurs lines, angles, and meanings too.

Like the surrealists, whose aesthetic is invoked here, this show plays with our perceptions. It smudges the divisions between disciplines—art and anthropology—and between the rational and irrational. Its curator, American art historian Wendy Grossman, has assembled more than a hundred vintage photographs of African figures, masks, and ornaments, taken





Man Ray, *Noire et blanche* (negative version), 1926 ©2010 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

in the 1920s and '30s by Man Ray and his modernist colleagues—Raoul Ubac, Charles Scheeler, Cecil Beaton, and others—and brought them together with many of the actual objects depicted in the images. The intention, Grossman writes in the exhibition catalogue, is to show “the instrumental role photographs played in the process by which African objects—formerly considered ethnographic curiosities—came to be perceived as the stuff of Modern art in the first decades of the twentieth century.”

In many instances, the photographs and three-dimensional objects in the show have been separated for more than half a century, disseminated through widely different public and private collections on both sides of the Atlantic. Bringing them together in this exhibition represents a startling first. It also represents 15 years of intense research by Grossman. Along the way, she has folded a number of other themes into her original premise: the exhibition and catalogue examine

the relationship between image and object, the politics and poetics of surrealism, and the impact of African culture on western fashion, music, and art-collecting of the time.

Carol Mayer, MOA’s curator of Oceanic and African art and the liaison curator for this touring exhibition, walks into the Michael Audain Gallery, where preparators are busily installing the show. Jazz plays in the background and Jean Cocteau’s surreal 1930 film *Blood of a Poet* is silently projected over a wall and across the floor. Blowups of two different black-and-white photographs of the same African object—a Bamileke figure from Cameroon—signal the complex ways in which photography can transform its subject and influence our interpretation of it.

The carved wooden figure, known as “Bangwa Queen”, was photographed in about 1934 by the surrealism-influenced Man Ray and again in 1935 by the more formalist Walker Evans. Evans shot his photo in what looks

like an uninflected documentary fashion: the lighting is flat and even, the figure is seen straight on, and no one feature predominates over any other. Man Ray’s photo, however, is dramatically different: shot from above, with crossways lighting and deep shadows, the figure looks both fierce and sorrowful. Eyes and mouth are expressively exaggerated.

The three-dimensional works in the exhibition, ranging from tiny ivory pendants to intricately carved wooden doors, are fine examples of African art, Mayer tells the Straight, but their importance in this context is to pose questions about their representation. “How did the particular art movements of the time influence the way people looked at them?” The framing and lighting, the camera angle, the kind of paper on which the print was developed, and the way the image was cropped all played a role in the message the photographer wanted to convey.

Mayer points out a solarized self-portrait

of Man Ray near the gallery entrance, and an introductory panel letting visitors know who this artist was. Born Emmanuel Radnitzky in Philadelphia in 1890, Man Ray worked across the disciplines of photography, film, painting, and sculpture, and is described in terms like multifarious artist and polyartist. He participated in the New York Dadaist movement in 1915 and, after his move to Paris in 1921, joined the surrealists, who enthusiastically embraced the art of Africa and other pre-industrial cultures. Although he's best known for his experimental portraits of women, Man Ray produced over 50 photographs featuring African, Oceanic, and Pre-Columbian art during the 1920s and '30s.



Man Ray, Untitled (Pende pendant and Chokwe whistle), 1933 ©2010 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

representing the world and were thinking that western classical traditions had pretty much exhausted themselves," she says.

The unprecedented slaughter and destruction of the First World War and the association with mechanization and industrialization deeply disillusioned them. "Basically, the motto of the Dadaists and surrealists was: 'If this is what civilization brings us, we reject it.' " Instead, they looked to pre-industrial cultures to repudiate western hierarchies and values, Grossman continues. "They had the perception that these objects had some kind of spiritual

core, that they demonstrated a way to break with the rationality of the Enlightenment and go more towards the unconscious and the spiritual."

Speaking by phone from her home in College Park, Maryland, near the University of Maryland, where she is an adjunct professor, Grossman explains the appeal of non western art to avant-garde artists of the time. "Artists were looking for innovative ways of

Grossman will be in town for the exhibition opening and to deliver two public talks. For information about the varied programming that accompanies the exhibition, including films, music, and performance art, go to the MOA website . And mind the encircling fog.



Charles Sheeler, Untitled (Fang Reliquary Figure), c. 1916-17 ©The Lane Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Head-shaped cup (mbwoong ntey), Kuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Late 19th-early 20th century, Photo: Kwaku Ofori-Ansa



James Latimer Allen, Portrait of James Lesesne Wells, c. 1930



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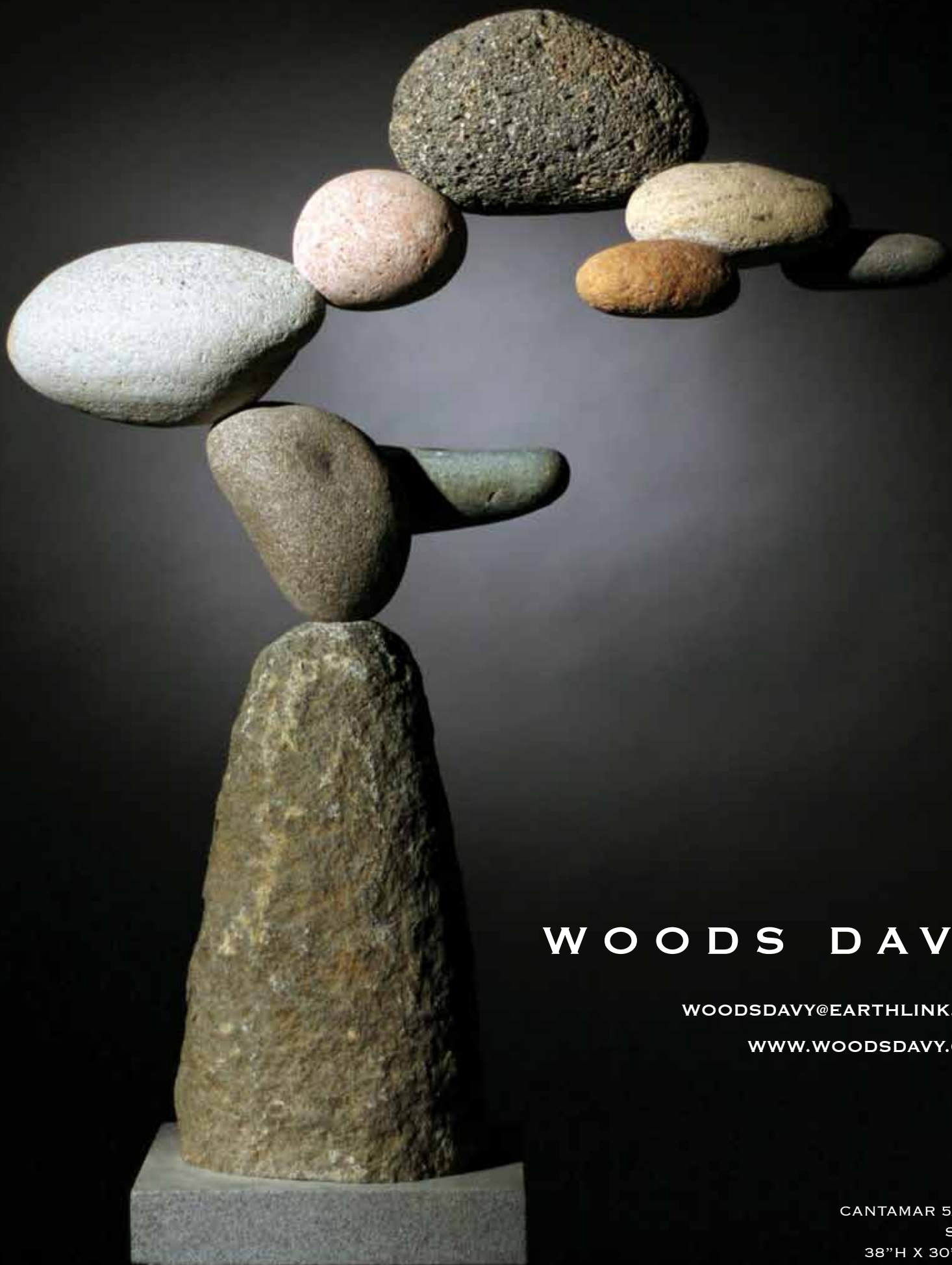
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# PROFILE OF AN ARTIST AND COLLECTOR

## AN INTERVIEW WITH WOODS DAVY

By David Cassera

Like many famous artists, Venice Beach, CA, based artist and sculptor Woods Davy feels a connection between his own work and the love of collecting tribal art.

Upon entering Davy's home the sheer number of masks of the same type is overwhelming. As you walk into his working studio an army of full costumed figures awaits, which reminds us of the very visceral experience that is tribal art.

### **Where did you study art and what was your main area of focus?**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for a BFA, and the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana for an MFA, both in sculpture. I always took art classes when I was growing up in Miami, and then in Washington D.C.

### **Where and when was your first exhibition as a professional artist?**

My first mature exhibition was at Security Pacific Bank Plaza in downtown L.A. in 1980.

### **Can you explain your sculpture and what/who inspired you?**

Initially I was working with the idea of creating a resolved balance between man-made and natural form, both mind and emotion. Later, I focused on some of the natural elements and tried to reduce those details down to their essence. I ended up with the Cantamar series, where the stones appear to float, denying gravity and their identity. I feel compelled to make these works, as they give me a sense of the unexpected, but it is more than that, there is something in the way I feel when I look at them, something that brings serenity. I like that feeling, it's very resolved, and very benevolent. And I make these large granite boulder works that are quite the opposite, tough and animated, very brute. They take me from the tranquility of the Cantamar series to a feeling of agitated, rough trade.

### **How did you get involved with collecting Tribal Art?**

During a Los Angeles County Museum Art and Architecture tour of our home/studio, in 1987, Eleanor Stendahl saw a fake Zapotec urn, a little Baja souvenir, and asked why don't we get a real one. I said how do I do that, and she said, I'll trade you one for that sculpture over

there. I had always been interested in art from other cultures, so that got me started.

### **What was the first piece of tribal art you acquired?**

It was a very brute Kumu mask that I bought from Mort Dimondstein, probably about 1990. When I first saw it, I knew it was mine, I wanted that energy. It took me a year to pay for it.

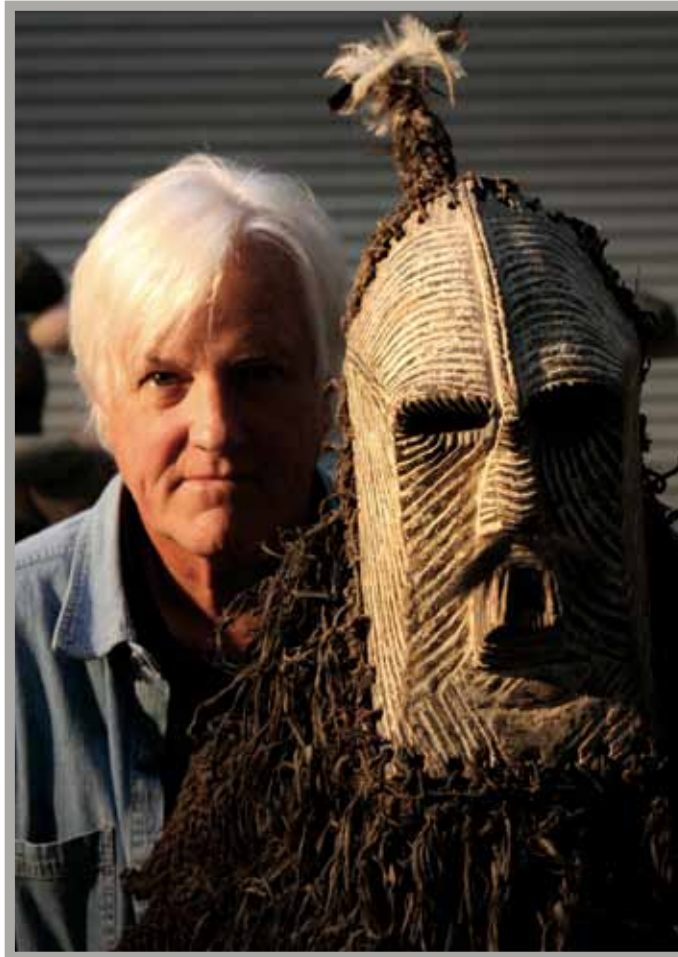
study it as I lay there

### **How many Kifwebe masks do you think you have in your collection?**

I guess I have about 300 or so, including the small maskettes, panels, and other kifwebe related material.

### **Do you have a favorite Kifwebe or a special memory of a Kifwebe that was a great expense or task to acquire?**

Sometimes, I see a mask, and it startles me and stares right back at me, and I really want to live with it for the rest of my life. But, of course, it can be difficult to actually acquire it, especially with limited financial resources. It took me about 5 years to acquire a mask that Alex Arthur had, it was always on my mind, but out of my reach, until it just happened one day. One of my favorite masks comes from Pierre Dartevelle, who has always been very kind to me, it is a Northern Kalebwe mask with great power and presence. And I have bought some very interesting top masks from Didier Claes and his father Patric. Once, while in Brussels, Didier said, "Oh Woods I have something for you, come into the kitchen", and there was an ancient, female Songye mask with triple eyebrows. I felt an overpowering excitement as I grabbed it immediately and said thank you. And his father Patric field collected the aggressive female mask, with full costume, in the photo. I love that mask, Patric has been very helpful to me. I have known Marc Felix for many years, and he has always helped me in my quest to learn.



### **What first attracted you to collect Songye Kifwebe masks from the DRC and what do they mean to you?**

I think it goes back to my early sculptures, that combination of opposites that creates something greater than the sum of its parts. I was fascinated by the intelligence of the architecture, out of which emerged this powerful expressive force, again both mind and emotion. With these two extremes present in one object, it produced an otherworldly force that really spoke to me. I wanted to possess these forms and always hold them, examine them, learn from them. I usually take one to bed every night, and just

There are many other European dealers that have become good friends as well, like Alain Naoum, who has been very generous over the years. Going to Bruneau is always one of the greatest experiences of my life.

### **Do Kifwebe masks inspire you as an artist, and if so how?**

Yes, they do, but I'm still learning how. Perhaps sometime I'll know, but now I just get hints and flashes. That makes the process of collecting art and making art more of a journey. I think once you know all the answers, it becomes less inspiring.







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