

Bulletin Arts Premiers **TRIBAL** **ART** newsletter

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May, Mai 2011

VOLUME 2, 5

NYC
TRIBAL
ART
WEEK

marketInsight • culture • affairs • reviews • legalFront • interviews • objects • ads

MarketINSIGHT

MAJOR AUCTIONS ATTRACT COLLECTORS TO NY FOR TRIBAL ART WEEK

Unless you have been living under a rock you know that May is the busiest time of year for Tribal Art in New York City. Spring weather, auctions, gallery exhibitions, and events draw the biggest collectors and dealers to New York like a magnet.

Sotheby's is hoping for a continuation of sales records like those of 2010. Last year was a sensational year for Sothebys who raked in over \$33.8 million for African and Oceanic Art Sales alone. Sotheby's International African & Oceanic Art sales account for nearly 85% of the market.

On Friday the 13 of May at 10:00 AM, Sothebys will commence session 1 of a two part sale. The Robert Rubin Collection of African Art is one of the most important collections of African art to appear on the international market in recent years. Mr. Rubin (1934- 2009) was a lifetime trustee of the Museum for African Art in New York and a major figure in the field. The relatively small collection of 50 works reflects his extraordinary taste and discernment and his quest for the finest examples from each region and style.

Among the many highlights is a Baule Male Ancestor Figure from Ivory Coast, (estimated \$600,000-\$900,000), which is known as the best of its type. It was created by a master carver whose attention to detail is unsurpassed in African art. The unusually large (24 in) sculpture is of exceptionally high quality. It boasts impressive provenance and has also been widely published, including in the prestigious L'Art Nègre by Pierre

Meauzé in 1967. Another major highlight from the sale is a Dogon Nduleri Male Ancestor Figure, (estimated \$200,000-\$300,000) which is the Name-Piece of the Master of the Slanted Eyes and the companion to a female figure in the collection of the Musée du Louvre in Paris. In addition A Songye Male Power Figure, (estimated \$150,000-\$250,000) which was widely exhibited and published in works such as William Rubin's, "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern, New York, 1984, vol I, p.159.

At 2:00 PM Sothebys will start the second part of the sale; The May auction of African, Oceanic, and Pre-Columbian Art which offers a rich selection of exceptional art from the traditional cultures of sub-Saharan Africa, the Pacific Islands and Indonesia, as well as Central and South America.

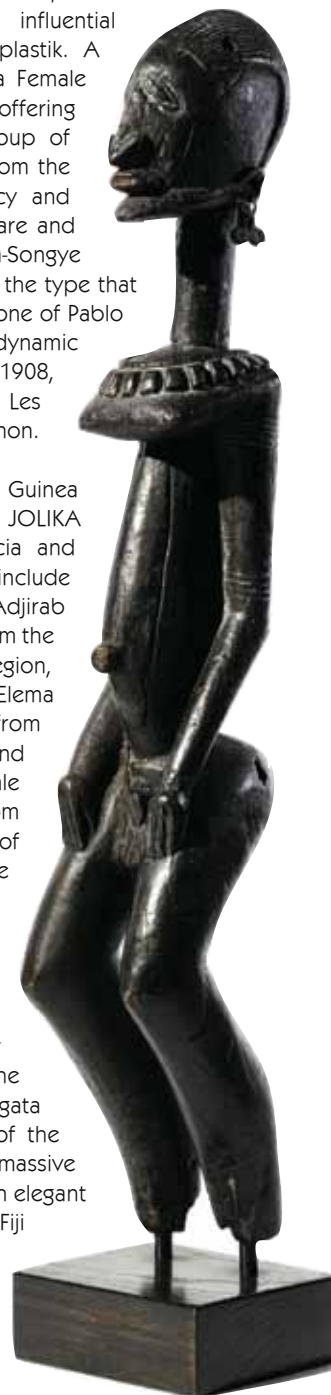
The inspiration modern European artists drew from these traditional cultures in the first decades of the 20th century is particularly evident in a selection of sculpture from the collection of renowned Modern art dealer Pierre Matisse (lots 167-202). The son of the painter Henri Matisse opened his gallery in New York in 1931 and launched some of the earliest exhibitions of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas in the United States. Represented in the group are a beautiful Fang Reliquary Figure, a striking Kanak Roof Spire, and a sublime Teotihuacan Greenstone Mask.

Pre-Columbian art is well represented from various private collections including an important group of Andean textiles and ceramics from the collection of Roland Hartmann, Switzerland; fine Maya ceramics, Central American gold and an Olmec jade spoon pendant of extraordinary emerald green color from a North American private collection. A large Chinesco Seated Male Figure, Type A, is among the evocative West Mexican ceramic figures from various American collections.

The sale features a strong selection of African

art, including an important Punu Mask from Gabon which was published in Carl Einstein's influential 1915 book *Negerplastik*. A magnificent Yoruba Female Figure of a woman offering a ram leads a group of West African art from the collection of Nancy and Richard Bloch. A rare and important Luba-Songye kifwebe Mask is of the type that probably inspired one of Pablo Picasso's most dynamic periods, 1907-1908, when he painted *Les Femmes d'Alger*.

Selections of New Guinea art from the JOLIKA collection of Marcia and John Friede include an important Adjirab Reliquary Figure from the Porapora River Region, a rare pair of Elema Barkcloth Masks from the Papuan Gulf, and an intricate Male Ancestor Figure from a sacred flute of the Chambri Lake region. Highlights from Polynesia include an Easter Island Figure, one of the finest early examples of the rare moai tangata type, reminiscent of the island's famous massive stone heads, and an elegant early 19th century Fiji yaquona (kava) bowl in the form of a sea turtle. Images-Courtesy Sothebys.



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Haida
Mountain Goat
Horn Spoon
Mid 19th Century
Length 10 3/4"

MuseumHAPPENINGS

ON NOW

THE ANDEAN TUNIC, 400 BCE–1800 CE
THROUGH SEPTEMBER 18, 2011
THE MICHAEL C. ROCKEFELLER WING, 1ST FLOOR
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

RECONFIGURING AN AFRICAN ICON: ODES TO THE MASK
BY MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS FROM THREE
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THE BRUCE MUSEUM, GREENWICH, CT

CENTRAL NIGERIA UNMASKED:
ARTS OF THE BENUE RIVER VALLEY
THROUGH JULY 24, 2011
FOWLER MUSEUM, UCLA

BEHIND THE SCENES: THE REAL STORY OF THE QUILEUTE
WOLVES
THROUGH AUGUST 14, 2011
SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

L'AFRICA DELLE MERAVIGLIE. ARTI AFRICANE NELLE
COLLEZIONI ITALIANE
THROUGH JUNE 5, 2011
PALAZZO DUCALE GENOVA , ITALY

DYNASTY AND DIVINITY: IFE ART IN ANCIENT NIGERIA
THROUGH MAY 22, 2011
VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

DOGON
APRIL 5 - JULY 24, 2011
MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY. PARIS FRANCE

THE MAKING OF IMAGES
THROUGH JULY 17, 2011
MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY, PARIS FRANCE

ART OF THE AMERICAN INDIANS:
THE THAW COLLECTION
APRIL 24 - SEPTEMBER 24, 2011
DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART

PICASSO: GUITARS 1912–1914
FEBRUARY 13–JUNE 6, 2011
THIRD FLOOR
MOMA, NEW YORK

MayAUCTIONS

BONHAMS NEW YORK

FINE AFRICAN, OCEANIC AND PRE-COLUMBIAN ART
MAY 12, 2011 @ 1PM

SOTHEBYS NEW YORK

THE ROBERT RUBIN COLLECTION OF AFRICAN ART
MAY 13, 2011 @ 10AM

AFRICAN, OCEANIC AND PRE-COLUMBIAN ART INCLUDING
PROPERTY FROM THE PIERRE AND TANA MATISSE
FOUNDATION

MAY 13, 2011 @ 2PM

ARTE PRIMITIVO

TRIBAL & PRE-COLUMBIAN ART, CLASSICAL, EGYPTIAN &
ASIAN ANTIQUITIES
MAY 23, 2011

ZEMANEK-MUNSTER

65TH TRIBAL ART AUCTION
MAY 28, 2011

TribalPUBLICATIONS

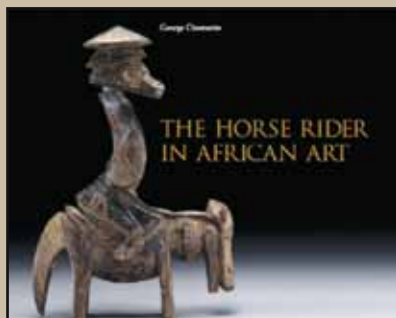
THE HORSE RIDER IN AFRICAN ART

BY GEORGE CHEMECHE

**Special Book signing event at the Sothebys Cocktail Party
May 11, 2011.**

Horses are very rare in Africa. The few to be found west of Sudan, from the lands of the Sahara and Sahel down to the fringes of the tropical forests, belong to the king, the chief warrior and to notable persons. Due to the dense humidity of the tropical rainforest and the deadly tsetse fly, only

restricted numbers of horses survive. And yet rider and mount sculptures are common among the Dogon, Djenné, Bamana, Senufo and the Yoruba people. The Akan-Asante people of Ghana and the Kotoko of Chad produced a good deal of small casting brass and bronze sculptures. Some of the artists could barely even have caught a glimpse of a horse. This visually stunning book presents a wealth of African art depicting the horse and its rider in a variety of guises, from Epa masks and Yoruba divination cups to Dogon sculptures and Senufo carvings. In Mali, the Bamana, Boso and Somono ethnic groups still celebrate the festivals of the puppet masquerade. The final chapter of this book is dedicated to the art and cult of these festivals, which are still alive and well. It is not the habit of the African artist to provide intellectual statements for his work, yet his unique creative dynamic and far-reaching vision does not conflict with that of his Western counterpart. It is fair to state that the African, who though not educated in Western art history, contributed his fair share to the shaping of modern art.



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POWER INCARNATE:

ALLAN STONE'S COLLECTION OF SCULPTURE FROM THE CONGO

MAY 14, 2011 – SEPTEMBER 4, 2011 AT THE BRUCE MUSEUM, GREENWICH, CT

The Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut, presents its newest exhibition Power Incarnate: Allan Stone's Collection of Sculpture from the Congo, opening on Saturday, May 14, 2011, and on view through September 4, 2011. The works are drawn from The Allan Stone Collection. Allan Stone was the noted art dealer, gallery owner, and collector who died in 2006 at the age of 74. Perhaps best known for his expertise in Abstract Expressionism, Mr. Stone's collection of African art is an extraordinary assemblage in its own right, a decidedly personal collection and a monument to a particular artistic vision. Guest curator for the exhibition is Kevin D. Dumouchelle, Assistant Curator for the Arts of Africa and the Pacific Islands at the Brooklyn Museum. The exhibition is supported by the Charles M. and Deborah G. Royce Exhibition Fund.

The prevailing region represented in the exhibition is the Congo, and a particular type, the power figure, are the largest group among these sculptures. Found in the Kongo and Songye cultures, both of which historically produced figures intended to protect their communities, these power figures, often called nkisi or nkishi, along with other conceptually related sculptures from the Congo basin are the focus of the exhibition. The works belong to a series of highly complex, charged and subtle political and cosmological institutions, broadly dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Small, differentiated social segments (blacksmith/carvers and diviners, or ngangas) that specialized in intervening in 'wilderness' on behalf of 'civilization' created and used these sculptures to harness spiritual forces to aid the community. To that end, these works are vehicles for humanity's control of nature, not the reverse. The sculptures are not tools or representations of spiritual forces, associated with the ancestral realm but through the informed, selective application of additional materials to their surfaces, layered over time, these sculptures become power incarnate.

Power sculpture from the Congo has a longstanding, cross-cultural formal appeal, which led to its proliferation in early twentieth-century Western collections. At that early moment, collectors appreciated African sculpture narrowly as formal solutions to issues in modernist figural sculpture, and often

removed the accumulated layers of power materials, which they regarded as impediments to aesthetic appreciation. Western audiences now appreciate that the varied surfaces of these works not only offer traces of the history of their use, but the accumulated evidence of their original intention as vessels for animating spirits. Power sculptures serve as indices not only of these spirits, but also of the agency of their original artists and practitioners. The



dense layers of applied materials create what the Kongo referred to as ngitukulu, or "astonishment." As vessels of power, these sculptures continue to act on us today.

"These artworks maintain a close visual and intellectual relationship to twentieth-century art, from the wild strokes of Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline to the assemblages of Joseph Cornell, on which Allan Stone made his name," said Kevin Dumouchelle, the exhibition's guest curator. "Indeed, the Stone collection's figures from the Congo share a visual and intellectual relationship with the assemblage sculpture that Stone championed. While Western sculpture took its force from its visual or conceptual impact, the Congolese works add a key ingredient - active power itself."

The Bruce Museum is located at 1 Museum Drive in Greenwich, Connecticut, USA. General admission is \$7 for adults, \$6 for seniors and students, and free for children under five and Bruce Museum members. Free admission to all on Tuesdays. The Museum is located near Interstate-95, Exit 3, and a short walk from the Greenwich, CT, train station. Museum hours are: Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., and closed Mondays and major holidays. Groups of eight or more require advance reservations. Museum exhibition tours are held Fridays at 12:30 p.m. Free, on-site parking is available. The Bruce Museum is accessible to individuals with disabilities. For information, call the Bruce Museum at (203) 869-0376, or visit the Bruce Museum website at www.brucemuseum.org.

IMAGES:

- 1. Kongo Figure Power Figure (Nkisi).** Democratic Republic of the Congo or Angola. Wood, glass, textile, fibers, pigment, organic materials. 11 x 5 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches.
- 2. Kongo Figure Power Figure (Nkisi).** Democratic Republic of the Congo or Angola. Wood, glass, textile, fibers, pigment, resin, organic materials. 7 x 3 x 2 1/2 inches.
- 3. Kongo Figure Power Figure (Nkisi).** Democratic Republic of the Congo or Angola. Wood, metal, glass, fibers, raffia, pigment, organic materials. 15 1/4 x 6 x 4 inches.
- 4. Songye Figure Power Figure (Nkishi) with Bishishi (Metal Studs).** Wood, metal, fiber, animal hide, feathers, snake skin. 35 x 13 x 15 inches.
- 5. Songye Figure Power Figure (Nkishi) with Mambele (Cowrie Shells).** Wood, metal, cowrie shells, fiber, beads, animal hide, organic materials. 21 x 6 x 5 1/2 inches.
- 6. Songye Figure Power Figure (Nkishi) with Bishishi (Hoe Blade).** Wood, metal, fiber, animal hide, feathers, beads, organic materials. 36 1/2 x 12 x 15 inches.

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SACRED ART OF THE EAST

BY RAHUL PATEL

OBJETS D'ART AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

EXCLUSIVE PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAUREEN CLARK

The art of antiquity in Africa, art in Europe and specially Asian art, has been revered by common people in everyday life. When the art uplifts the masses and heals, it becomes sacred art. Indeed, Asian art is a tour de force of life, which has the power to heal.

In my journey for the last three decades, I have witnessed, adored, and collected some of these most rare sacred art objects from the East.

In Japan, Buddhism inspired Zen. Art by Zen masters and monks awakened and enlightened people, and it became ZENGA ART. This visual art meditation through calligraphy has power beyond words to transform lives. One of such living masters of Zen and sword was Yamaoka Tesshu, 1836-1888. Tesshu calligraphed the most Zen art in the world, one million art pieces, which earned millions of dollars to benefit temples and shrines, never collected a single yen for himself. His signature piece to represent his mastery was MU calligraphy, which means NOTHING. It is the essence of Zen. By being just empty, we can live our true nature. It is a healing sutra of life.

I have discovered that this sacred art becomes medicine in other parts. In Borneo Indonesia Dayak culture, the shaman energizes small charms and amulets to wear around his neck to heal. These tiny, protective amulets also are hung on cradles to keep babies safe. The second art object in this article was collected by Irwin Hersey, who popularized Indonesian art in the West.

These Dayak carvings are also believed to possess curative powers. In curing ceremonies, these wooden figurines are shaved for healing rituals to be consumed by patients as evidenced by the third art piece in this article.

Far away in the snow kingdom of the East, Tibet, the folk Buddhist deity, called JAMBHALA, is a

beloved guardian, who honors many common home altars. It is a Tibetan manifestation of the Indian deity, Kubera. Jambhala brings wealth, prosperity, longevity, and protection among Tibetan, Nepali, Chinese, Indian and in many Asian cultural beliefs. It is rare to find a wooden Jambhala from about the 15-16th century, which was used for ritualistic Tibetan altar.

Nat is a spirit, a rather little-known, protective, medicinal amulet from Myanmar (Burma). It is believed that there are 37 NATS, spirits, among the followers in Myanmar. Nats are also used by shaving off when necessary to mix in beverages to drink for curative powers.

As my research in cross-cultural study of sacred art, it is the source of their ELAN. The sacred art becomes the life force, like Polynesians

call it MANA, Sioux Indians call it WAKANDA, Hindus call it DEVA, and Lega in Congo call this KALAMO. It is truly a transformation of art where art becomes, in fact, medicine to heal for highest good, and I am truly in awe, dealing with this genre of tribal art.

IMAGES:

1. Dayak tribal charm, shaved, from James Willis provenance.
2. Dayak protective charm from Thomas Murray provenance ex Irwin Hersey collection.
3. NAT spirit, Tony Anninos provenance.
4. Wooden Jambhala, circa 15-16th cent. Robert Brundage provenance.
5. Yamaoka Tesshu from John Stevens provenance, Robyn Buntin of Honolulu collection.

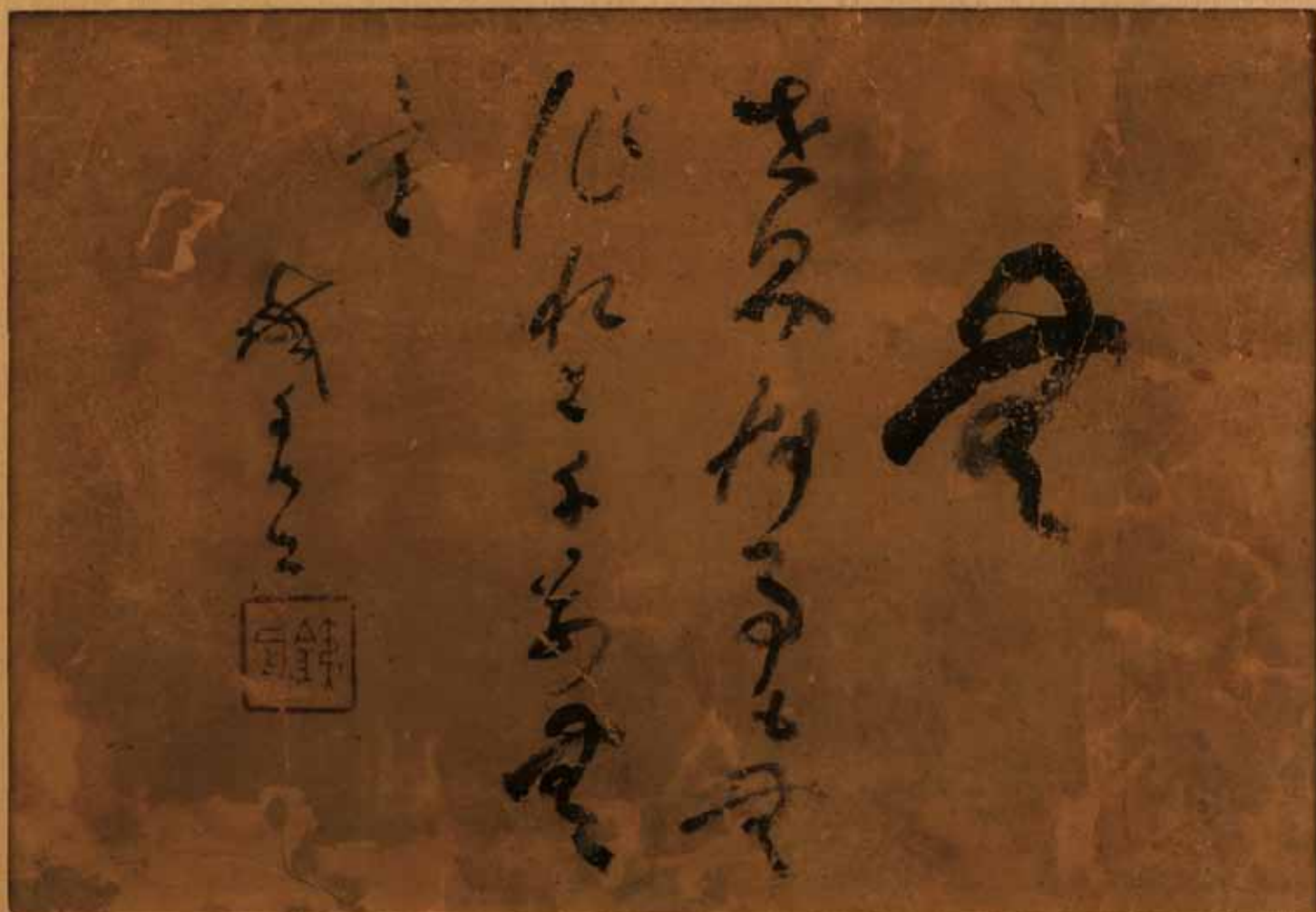




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DR. WERNER MUENSTERBERGER

By David Cassera



Surrealists, and Eckart von Sydow, professor of "Primitive Kunst" and a psychoanalyst in Berlin.

During the mid 1930's Muensterberger discovered the Museum fur Völkerkunde in Berlin where he examined outstanding pieces of tribal art. During that time he was a student at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, while also studying art history. He also visited West Africa during this time and his love for African Art widened. Sydow convinced him to pursue ethnology and psychoanalysis studies in Berlin but he was forced to flee from the Nazi's. He continued his studies at the University of Leyden and the University of Basel, writing a dissertation on Indonesian mythology, and another, in art history, on the influence of Italian art on the School of Utrecht painters during the 17th century. During the war in Amsterdam he spent much of the time in hiding at the house of his then girlfriend, Dutch actress Elisabeth Andersen.

In 1947 Muensterberger emigrated to the United States with little cash and two works of art. One piece, a Benin Ivory that found its home in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He took a job as a professor of ethopsychiatry at Columbia University until 1951 and then taught the same subject at the State University of New York. He retired in 1974 and moved to London with his third wife. Then in 1985 he moved back to New York and opened a private practice. Some of Muensterberger's patients included Laurence Olivier, James Dean and Marlon Brando. His near-century-long life included exchanges with personalities like Thomas Mann, Mary Wigman, Pablo Picasso, Sigmund Freud, Constantin Brancusi, Walt Disney, Albert Einstein and Robert Rosenblum.

His 1994 Muensterberger wrote the book titled "Collecting, an Unruly Passion", which psychoanalyzes art collectors, and is a staple publication in any great tribal art library. The book explores what motivates collectors, exploring deep childhood experiences which contribute to neurotic behavior, such as using collecting as a crutch to deal with stress and anxiety. During the last years of his life, Muensterberger was writing a book on the psychology of art forgery to be titled, "Forgers on the Couch", in which he "psychoanalyzed" historical and modern forgers. "Most forgers," he said, "don't just cheat the original artists they are forging, but also the expert, the ideal father figure."

During an interview by George Nelson Preston, Muensterberger was asked to give one reason why he collected and he simply answered, "

The Tribal Art World mourns the loss Dr. Werner Muensterberger who died March 6, 2011 at his home in New York City. He was ninety-seven years old.

Dr. Muensterberger was a psychoanalyst, art historian, author, expert and collector of African art.

Werner was born in Westfalia on April 13th, 1913, to a wealthy family. He was first exposed to African, Modern and Chinese art by Baron Eduard von der Heydt to whom he dedicated his 1955 book *Sculpture of Primitive Man*.

Muensterberger was exposed to great modern and tribal art collectors and scholars at a young age and purchased his first piece of African Art as a teenager; a Yoruba Bronze Horse Rider from Amsterdam's jodenmarkt. He spent summers in von der Heydt's Swiss Monte Verità retreat in Ascona where here he befriended Charles Ratton the legendary Parisian tribal art dealer whose Paris gallery was a gathering place for the



1913-2011

for me it is a dialogue with the artist even though I have not met him personally ...indeed it reminds me of my talks with Brancusi, whom I had met through Tristan Tsara."

If you ever had the opportunity to visit Dr. Muensterberger's apartment in New York as I did on many occasion you may agree the one piece that undoubtedly grabbed your attention was the Bene Lulua Helmet Mask. Muensterberger said, "I saw this mask at Merton Simpson's gallery around 1965. I walked in, took one look at the mask and knew I wanted it. I told Simpson, I'll take it. How much is it? Not a very commercial approach..."

This spontaneous and vigorous approach to collecting and life is something very special. Although he will be missed Muensterberger's legacy will live on through his publications inspiring and guiding the new generations for years to come..

IMAGES:

Right opposite: Guardian Post. Ethiopia.

Above: Helmet Mask. Bene Lulua, DR Congo. Ex Merton Simpson, NY

Center Right: Figural Drum finial or architectural element. Mbembe, southern Nigeria. Ex Henri Kamer, NY

Far Right: Fang Head. Valley of Ntem, South Cameroon. Louis Perrois named the "cry of the ancestor", (Le "cri" de l'ancêtre). Published by Perrois in Arts d'Afrique Noire #113, Spring 2000.



THROUGH THE EYES OF OUR ANCESTORS: AFRICAN ART FROM THE JAMES AND MARJORIE L. WILSON COLLECTION

MAY 19, 2011 – JUNE, 2011 AT THE QCC ART GALLERY, QUEENS, NY



This exhibition places the art of various African cultures nearer to its original context, where sculpture is only part of a larger ensemble that creates a complete character, an ancestor, or a spiritual entity. Without all its components, that entity could not exist.

African art was traditionally made within a strict and complex social context. Workshops and carvers were often secluded as they rendered spiritually resonant objects and continued traditions, often with surprising changes in form or detail to keep up with demands of changing societies. Within each culture secret societies and/or royal courts decided when, where, and how an object was made. Currently in African cultures, many people contribute to the creation of a masquerade ensemble, whether in currency or in kind. A ceremonial mask or figure is commissioned from a carver, and the mask consecrated with input from a fetisher who empowers it and costume makers who help create its identity. Ultimately, over its lifetime a mask or ensemble undergoes change, whether through erosion, repair, or refurbishment. Additions such as textiles, metal, medicine amulets, and pigments affect both the wood and the costume. And that, of course, reveals

the history of the object to people within the society and to Western collectors as well (see *Surfaces*, edited by Donna Page, Leonard Kahan and Pascal Imperato).

In the West, our recognition of different components within African art has evolved over time. Contemporary art in the West has moved beyond the abstract stage and is now in a polymorphic phase, which opens us to other aspects of African artistic production. Moving through Cubism to Abstraction, and through Minimalism to Conceptualism requires acceptance of change in our own views. These art trends changed as societal values, technology, trade, and contacts changed and developed. What was recently accepted as exciting rather quickly becomes doctrinaire and antiquated as new techniques, images, and values take their place.

We're not suggesting that all these fast changes took place in African cultures, altering their art drastically from one generation to the next, though change occurred there too. Rather, we're suggesting that we are predisposed to see and accept our own current perceptions within African art, and can pull from its numerous styles and expressions those that appeal to us most, given our current way of seeing and thinking. Neither is African art constant. There are many types of expression, representing a variety of institutions, traditions, and deities. We often pick that which we think represents "African art" according to the state of our own current knowledge. Then, where do we start?

Before and during the 19th century, with only few exceptions, Europeans seeing through the lens of colonialism, racism, and hierarchical comparisons of cultures, selected artifacts that best expressed their vision of the so-called 'primitive man.' Alternatively, they admired objects such as carved ivories, which fit their definition of art. That limited vision expanded as more attention was given to examining the plastic values of African sculpture and knowing local histories of the objects. And eventually, Cubism was one of the main yardsticks by which one could see and appreciate some of the intent, technique, and profound value systems in African art. The reduction of representational form to its basics was appealing to European artists and eventually to collectors as well.

In past gallery exhibitions and publications, we have personally examined other aspects

of African art, such as minimalism—the ability to reduce form to its most essential, with an efficiency and purity of form and line comparable to that found in contemporary Western art. In other publications, we investigated African art from the standpoint of gestures, color, surfaces, and metamorphosis—the combining of human and animal images on artifacts. As we continued investigating art from the African continent, we found more and more parallels in American art history. As one would find in any art of long standing, that of both continents served the needs of one generation after another, helping each society carry and preserve the messages, history, and values of their peoples and institutions.

Today in the West, there has been a tendency to collect African art by focusing on such qualities as rarity, creativity, cubistic formal structure, perfection of form and a well-developed patina that shows societal usage and thus reverence for the object. The age of any piece, though not necessarily a criterion for good art, does allow us to know that the sculpture was created generations ago, with fewer Western influences or commercialism. Such an object has an underlying rarity, as obviously fewer such objects can now be found.



Once a work of African art has been removed from its original context, it is given a different significance, reflecting the aesthetics of the collector or the exhibiting institution, and removing it from the original intent of the culture that made and used it. The object may be moved from one display to another, from a private collection to a museum exhibition, each with its own way of interpreting African art. For instance, in a recent QCC exhibition of the Marshall and Caroline Mount collection of Cameroon objects, we accepted the hypothesis that all categories of sculpture and craft, in all materials and modes of usage should be considered African art.

Yes, Jim and Marge Wilson could have collected African art from the aesthetic viewpoint of pure form, of internal sculptural relationships and beauty of line, volume, and proportion. Perhaps in the beginning of their collecting, in the 1970's, they did. But Jim, who had an interior design business, 'House of Ebony,' saw more in African art than pure form. In his own background, he has both Igbo and Asante ancestors. He understood that the excitement of ceremony, dance, and celebration demanded not only sculpture but a kaleidoscope of forms, colors, patina, and materials. His ultimate strength as a collector lay in his appreciation of the entire artifact, with its history intact. He saw the relationship among the many objects used within the same ceremony or event, in support of one another. While he recognized sculpture in its pure state — line, shape, volume, plane, and proportion — he was also drawn to the total presentation. These include the accoutrements, colors, textures, patinas and various raw materials that create the entity conceived by the original society and its masqueraders. These extraneous materials have often been discarded or omitted by dealers, collectors and museums that preferred the art to be seen in its 'pure' state. Jim Wilson was less interested in that 'pure' state, and more in the traditions reflected by the total ensemble, including the dance, its age, the refurbishments, additions and changes. This entire cultural artifact is a preserver of tradition, a transmitter of the aesthetics and values of its people.

In choosing these selections from Jim's collection, we hope to have encapsulated the very essence of his vision. Jim Wilson has brought to the collecting of African art a larger



statement, which he perceives as the true aesthetic. This approach integrates aspects of time, color, materials, music, and motion. Along with an object's fine, and sometimes profound, sculptural values, he has collected the entire costume, which requires only animation to revive its original appearance. He wants to feel the spit on the piece, to hear the secrets whispered into the wood.

We hope this exhibition conveys that spirit; that it expresses a bit more than one expects to see in a show of African art. We hope it will communicate the excitement of the full tradition reflected through the variety of material, textiles, colors and forms; that it will convey the sounds of the music, the motion of the dance, and the feeling of the festival or court. He wants us to see the whole, and understand that sculptural form is just a part of something much larger.

It was work and fun putting this exhibition together. We explored new territory. It had many surprises and turned us away from conventional thinking, more toward Jim

Wilson's vision. "Through the Eyes of Our Ancestors" has opened our eyes a bit more, onto the complexities of African art and what makes it so captivating. Our exploration of its meanings and aesthetics has been and still remains an ongoing process.

Leonard Kahan and Donna Page

IMAGES:

1. **Jolly Masquerade Headpiece**
Temne Sierra Leone
Wood, fabric, mirrors
28 1/2 inches
2. **Female Mask Ensemble**
Dan - Ivory Coast/Liberia
Wood, kaolin, textiles, brass bells, beads, basketry, cowries, mask 11 inches total length 63 inches
3. **Robe**
Hausa Nigeria
Cotton
40 x 56 inches

MUSEUM OF ART AND ORIGINS



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Photo: Petra Richterova



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28TH ANNUAL ANTIQUE ETHNOGRAPHIC ART SHOW

GALA PREVIEW OPENING:
AUGUST 11
THURSDAY 6-9 PM

SHOW: AUGUST 12 & 13
FRIDAY 10-5 SATURDAY 10-5



33RD ANNUAL ANTIQUARIAN INDIAN ART SHOW

GALA PREVIEW OPENING:
AUGUST 14
SUNDAY 6-9 PM

SHOW: AUGUST 15 & 16
MONDAY 10-5 TUESDAY 10-5

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Auction May 23, 2011, Tribal & Pre-Columbian Art,
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Mossi ram,
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Ancient Dogon wooden mask, Mali, circa early 1900s, 30 cm / 11.75 inches.