



.... news flashes from the Ethnic Arts Council

May 2011

The EAC has a website!

The Ethnic Arts Council launched their first website: www.ethnicartscouncil.org. In addition, the EAC has a new central email address: info@ethnicartscouncil.org. We encourage you to use this email address for general communications to the EAC.

The **Home** and **About Us** pages provides an incisive view of EAC in its present form as well as its historic founding with its energetic founders and their initial contributions to the field. Additional features include: **Upcoming Programs** (a list of future EAC programs), **News & Events** (a list of upcoming, note-worthy, tribal art shows and museum exhibitions), **Past Programs** (a select list of important past EAC programs and related events with links to the original pdf format), and the **e-News Archive** (with links to previous e-News editions in their original pdf format).

Our goal is to use the new website as a general bulletin board, as well as a recruiting tool for new members. When possible, please direct interested individuals to the website for general information about the EAC, a look at past and future programs, and requests for membership applications. The website will be updated regularly with the latest information on upcoming programs and events, so please use the website to stay informed.

Planting the Acorn to Grow the Oak: EAC Grants Program



“EAC’s philanthropic thrust was evident from the time of its founding in 1966,” declares Feelie Lee, current Chair of the Grants Committee. Forty-five years ago the early members – collectors, dealers, and scholars – directed their own monies to underwrite research and publications on tribal art. Given the dearth of information at that time; they donated and/or loaned part of their collections to local museums to help set up exhibits. EAC members helped, along with the other donors, to establish a tribal presence at various museums, e.g., the pre-Columbian collections at LACMA, the Natural History Museum and the Fowler as well the African collection at the Fowler. Today, the continuing generosity of EAC collectors can be seen in the African, pre-Columbian, Indonesian, and Korean artifacts that constitute the collections of major museums in California.



To augment member contributions to the museum world, the EAC developed a more formalized grant-giving program to fund research, publications, exhibitions, travel, honoraria, and other ethnic arts related projects. Over the past twenty plus years several hundred thousand dollars have been given to worthy recipients. “While we certainly are not the Ford Foundation” declares Feelie, “we do offer seed grants (ranging from \$10-\$15,000) with a one month turnaround time; we can be nimble and quick in our decision-making!” Most of the grant funds come from membership dues and special fundraisers, primarily the Annual Dinner & Silent Auction. “We work hard to keep our operating expenses low by spending wisely and maintaining a 30 /70 ratio of program expense to grant-making. In addition, all the work is performed by an unpaid and dedicated volunteer Board.”

Now the Grants Committee is refining and expanding the grants guidelines. A scholarship fund to support the next generation of scholars in the field, cultural survival projects, and an acquisition program are all on the agenda. “We want to be more impactful, as well as flexible”, Feelie states. “Collecting has changed from the time of our “tribal elders” when art was more affordable and accessible. Where will our new collectors and scholars come from? What cultures traditions should be preserved today? Can our grants help grow the next generation of collectors, scholars, and a culturally aware public?”

Reviews: Tribal Art Week in New York • May 2011

Last week was a most memorable and exciting one for the tribal world.

On Thursday May 12th Bonham’s held an auction of African, Pre-Columbian and Oceanic Art, all arranged by EAC board member Fred Backlar, the tribal art specialist at Bonham’s.



Friday the 13th, Sotheby's held two auctions. In the morning the choice collection of Robert Rubin, former chairman of the board of the Museum for African Art, was auctioned. This spectacular collection attracted eager collectors and dealers who bid nearly \$10 million dollars for the approximate 50 objects. Most notable were a Baule male statue that sold for \$1.3 million, a Yombe maternity figure that went for \$1.6 million, and an 8 inch Songye power figure covered by copper nails that was hammered down at \$1.8 million. Quoted prices did not include the Buyers Premium of 12%.

In the afternoon there was an auction of items from a variety of collections including property from the Pierre Matisse Foundation. Again prices for high-end items exceeded the upper price estimates, while many lesser objects barely made the minimum projection. Special objects of interest included a Yoruba standing female figure offering a ram that went for



\$1.4 million and a Luba-Songye Kifwebe mask that sold for \$360,000.

There were several places where dealers joined together to show their prized objects. At the Amyas Naegele gallery on 75th Street, EAC member Fily Keita offered African art and was joined by Seattle dealer Peter Boyd and New York dealers Young Robertson and James Stevenson. At the Nowes gallery, San Francisco dealer Dave De Roche and three other dealers showed a range of African, pre-Columbian, and Oceanic art. A more formal gathering of several top dealers, under the umbrella of a new tribal art association: AOA, was held at the Fletcher-Sinclair Mansion at 5th Avenue and 79th. John Friede, whose New Guinea collection is seminal to the de Young Museum's great collection, spoke at the opening of the AOA exhibition about his passion for tribal art and its influence on modern and contemporary art. Another group from the AOA, exhibited at the Bruce Frank Primitive Art gallery on the upper west side.

Many other galleries offered special exhibitions to welcome bidders from all parts of the US and Europe to the Bonhams and Sotheby's auctions. A special highlight was the exhibition of Kota reliquary figures by Bernard Dulon.

*Thanks to Richard Baum, Joshua Dimondstein, Frank Wiggers, Bruce Frank, Karen Petersen, and Tom Jaffe for providing information.

Ongoing African Art Exhibition in NY: Through the Eyes of Our Ancestors: African Art from the James and Marjorie L. Wilson Collection • Opening: May 19, 2011 (through June 30, 2011) • Queensborough Community College Art Gallery, NY

African art is usually experienced within the confines of a gallery, personal collection or a museum. Few have seen the objects in actual use, or masks danced with their costumes, accompanied by the appropriate music and ceremony. Today the legacy of the great African masquerading traditions is fast disappearing as a result of war, cultural change, unfavorable climate conditions, and changing values. Too few reliable sources have recorded masquerade costumes, and much has been lost to suit the Western expectations of isolated sculptural form. It is rare to find art from Africa intact as a single masquerade ensemble, and even more unusual to be able to assemble them all in one exhibit.

In the West there has often been a tendency to discard what was considered extraneous materials in order to focus on the mask's pure form but this exhibition helps to put objects back in their context. The full array of materials, colors and forms from the James and Marjorie L. Wilson collection reminds us of the





richness of African art and its cultures. Looking "through the eyes of our ancestors" awakens within the viewer a deep appreciation for artisans throughout Western Africa who fashioned images powerful enough to reach the spirits and touch the soul.

For over 40 years, the Wilsons had a commitment to collecting what they saw as the entire cultural artifact. They viewed the masquerading ensembles as preservers of tradition, and transmitters of the aesthetics and values of its people. As a result, we see the entire ensemble as it would have been performed within its culture, closer to its original context, with cloth, pigments, feathers, fur and amulets intact, encrusted with African soil, blood and other substances. As Christopher Roy reminds us in the text of *Kilengi*, "Every one of the objects is a document in the social history of the people who created it."

Reported by Karen Petersen. Special thanks go to Leonard Kahane, Donna Page, Charles Bordogna and Amadou Njoya, without whom the exhibition, catalog and review would not have been possible.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS:



**LA TRIBAL invites you to:
CULTURAL CROSSROADS III
& Tribal Art Appraisal Clinic
Fri/Sat/Sun, June 3 - 5, 2011
5900 Wilshire Blvd. (East Satellite Bldg.)
Los Angeles, CA (directly across from LACMA entrance)**

LA TRIBAL, an association of tribal art dealers in the Los Angeles area, specializing in the traditional arts of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas will exhibit for sale: authentic sculptures, masks, textiles, ceramics, baskets, beadwork, and other ethnographic artifacts. LA TRIBAL participating members (all EAC members), include: Bill Caskey/Liz Lees, Joshua Dimondstein, Philip Garaway, Mark Johnson, Leonard Kalina, Fily Keita, Kim Martindale, Jerry Solomon, & John Strusinski.

Regular hours:

Fri/Sat: 12pm to 8pm,

Sun: 12pm to 5pm.

Free Admission.

Parking: Street meters or paid lots.

Benefit Opening for GLEH Gay & Lesbian Elder Housing: Advancing Change in Housing, Care, & Community for Low-Income Seniors.

Thursday, June 2, 2011, 7pm to 10pm.

\$25 donation per person, payable to GLEH. At door or in advance at: www.gleh.org.



Appraisal Clinic Hours:

Sat, June 4: 1pm to 5pm. Sun, June 5: 1pm to 5pm.

\$20 fee, three item limit.

For details, please go to: www.latribal.com.

**Lecture and Book Signing with April Dammann
Saturday, June 4, 2011, 3pm • Fowler Museum at UCLA**

Exhibitionist: Earl Stendahl, Art Dealer as Impresario

Earl L. Stendahl arrived in Los Angeles in 1909 and went on to create one of the influential art galleries in the world. UCLA alumna, EAC member, and author April Dammann (Stendahl's granddaughter-in-law) discusses the history of Earl Stendahl's career, the subject of her first book. Never-published vintage photographs from the Stendahl family archive tell the story of the man who introduced modern art to Los Angeles and put pre-Columbian art on the map.



The Stendahl story (featuring more than two hundred photographs) is at its heart a Los Angeles story, peopled with celebrities, rocked by scandal, full of failure and triumph. The book is also personal.

Stendahl was the grandfather of EAC member and art dealer, Ron Dammann, the husband of April. She knew him—the exhibitionist who prevailed against all odds and inspired a family business that has lasted one hundred years.

For more information, please go to: www.fowler.ucla.edu

Upcoming Event in Development:

Santa Fe July 2011: Opportunities for EAC members to explore the best of Santa Fe. Members who are planning to go to Santa Fe during the week of July 5-12, please contact: Tamara Hoffman: tamara.hoffman222@gmail.com

Save the Date!



**EAC Annual Dinner & 45th Birthday Bash •
September 25, 2011**



RECENT PROGRAMS:

Indonesia: In the Footsteps of the Ancestors • Paul Greenwald • May 16

EAC member Paul Greenwald, as part of our *Armchair Adventure Series*, presented a documentary filmed while visiting three exotic islands in Indonesia. Paul traveled with his wife Isabel, EAC members Avrum and Martha Bluming, and John Strusinski. John, a well-known collector and dealer of tribal art, organized the trip and narrated the film.



The first segment brings us to the remote and barely accessible Poso Valley in northern Sulawesi Island. We are given a rare opportunity to view ancient megalithic sculptures and huge urns, used for secondary burials. It is believed these stone monuments were carved 1500 to 2500 years ago, by a culture unknown to the current inhabitants. The group moves south to the Toraja highlands, a people known for their elaborate funerary rites. We witness the funeral of a village noble accompanied by the prerequisite buffalo sacrifice, as well as the final resting place of ancestors: high cliff-face graves with carved wood effigies of the dead (Tau-Tau).



We next visit the Hindu-Buddhist culture on the island of Bali. Paul filmed dancers in a state of trance, attempting to stab themselves with ritual daggers, performances of classic Balinese music, and an exotic fruit market. Finally, we travel to Sumba Island, to view additional megalithic stones and visit weaving centers making traditional ikat-dyed textiles. John gives a step-by-step lesson in the difficult process of tying off, dying, and weaving these fantastic textiles (an example shown on left).



Endnotes:

Please send any relevant information, upcoming events, news, articles, or opinions for consideration for publication in future issues of the EAC e-news to Mark Johnson, editor, at: info@ethnicartscouncil.org

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Contributors: Mark Johnson, Richard Baum, Feelie Lee, Karen Petersen.

The Ethnic Arts Council of Los Angeles (EAC)

• Dedicated to Advancing the Knowledge, Interest, and Appreciation of Ethnic Art •
www.ethnicartscouncil.org

**Become a member! Contact: Lyn Avins (lavins@ucla.edu) or
Tamara Hoffman (tamara.hoffman222@gmail.com)**



SPECIAL EAC BENEFIT PERFORMANCE



LOVELAND

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY ANN RANDOLPH

Fasten your seatbelts for a cross-country flight
you will never forget!!

June 30, 2011

*“Riotously demented and
brilliantly humane”*
--SF Bay Times

Santa Monica Playhouse
1211 4th Street
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Departure Time

8 pm

Hilarious and deeply human Ann Randolph embodies many characters, including heroine Frannie Potts – an irreverent but lovable misfit overwhelmed by grief at the loss of her mother whose ashes she carries in a suitcase (her mother “loved traveling”) stored in the overhead compartment. A wild ride in the sky with a crew of outrageous characters ensues where Sex, Death, Chopin fill the air and Frannie stumbles her way from awkward confusion to a glimpse of the mystery, tragedy, and the true beauty formed by loss that unites us all.

Ann Randolph, a gifted and innovative writer-performer, is a comic genius in the Gilda Radner/Lily Tomlin tradition. She is a winner of numerous solo awards, including the Ovation for her play, *Squeeze Box*, which was produced by Mel Brooks for Off Broadway.



- Sumptuous Desserts & Wine Reception
- Only 90 seats available!! (priority seating to first class passengers)
- Tax-deductible Contribution

Tickets: ■ Coach \$60 ■ Business \$75 ■ First Class \$100

• ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE EAC NEXT GENERATION SCHOLARSHIP FUND •

Send with enclosed check by JUNE 28th to Feelie Lee, 510 Rustic Road, Santa Monica, CA 90402