



...the e-newsletter of the Ethnic Arts Council ...update... september/october 2008

auctions ...

A “Cooked” Provenance?

The auction catalog described Lot 33 as a boomerang “likely to have been collected” by James Cook in 1770 on his visit to Australia’s Botany Bay. It would have been the most collectable piece of “first contact” brought back to the Old World from Down Under. There were alleged links to Cook’s widow’s estate and to the diary of his botanist Joseph Banks. The Australian Government considered bidding for the hunting weapon and to return it as a national treasure. An Aboriginal tribe laid claim to the bent stick. It was suggested the British Government buy the boomerang and return it to Australia as an act of atonement for colonization. The National Museum of Australia had provenance concerns, but nevertheless mustered a low (and rejected) pre-auction bid.



Reason for the ado: The substantial monetary difference between an “attributed to” artifact vs. the “real thing”. As a true Cook boomerang Lot 33 could have fetched some \$100,000 plus, while a well-crafted bent stick of the early 19th c. would require a check of a mere \$1,000. The tiebreaker in the provenance tumult came from an ethnographer and tribal art dealer who boiled his own investigation down to the statement: “You can’t claim to have the Holy Grail and turn up with a tea cup.” Christie’s, London, withdrew Lot 33 on the eve of the September 26th auction and promised further research.

More on James Cook’s collections from his three Pacific voyages: *Adrienne L. Kaeppler, Artificial Curiosities, Bishop Museum Press, 1978*

at LACMA ... more info at www.lacma.org.

No Building Slump: Major Resnick Gift Supports LACMA’s Phase II

If you wondered what would fill the gray void atop LACMA’s parking garage, it will be the **Lynda and Stewart Resnick Exhibition Pavilion** to be completed by mid 2010. A most generous \$55 million gift of the Los Angeles-based philanthropists supports the construction of a single-storey, 45,000 sqft. Renzo Piano-designed exhibition space. Architecturally, the building will complement BCAM, including Piano’s signature sawtooth roof and acclaimed filtered lighting system. Another substantial component of the museum’s Phase II transformation is the renovation of LACMA West (the old May Co. building), a major engagement for the Culver City-based firm *spf:architects*.



...Before...



at LACMA ...

Exhibition: Five Centuries of Indonesian Textiles

Ongoing to March 15, 2009. Ninety plus rare and spectacular textiles, selected from the Mary Hunt Kahlenberg Collection and dating from the early 15th to the 20th c., are on display. Below images (detail) from the show.



Symposium: Talking Cloth – New Studies on Indonesian Textiles

Saturday, October 18, 2008, 10.00 AM to 4.30 PM. Concludes with an hour-long Balinese dance performance. Details of the program at <http://www.lacma.org/programs/pdfs/1018symposium.pdf>

Exhibition: Francis Alÿs: Fabiola, ongoing to January 4, 2009

On the way up to the Indonesian textiles exhibition you want to stop on the third floor of the Ahmanson Building and visit the single gallery installation of Francis Alÿs' "Fabiola". Some 300 paintings depict St. Fabiola, the wealthy 4th c. Roman sinner-turned-saint, the patron of the abused, the caretaker of the sick and the poor. Think Mother Teresa/Florence Nightingale (with money). The paintings by amateur artists were collected by Alÿs in flea markets of Europe and Latin America. They are copies of a long lost original by 19th c. French artist Jean-Jacques Henner which had "survived" in



postcards or etchings. Alÿs made a point that this assemblage not be exhibited in the context of contemporary galleries (some of his work is actually part of the new Latin American Galleries). LACMA shows "Fabiola" embedded in its European art showrooms, an artistic intervention of note.



The conceptual installation - both artist and curator avoid the word "art" - is visually compelling. It raises questions of authenticity, original, copy, and fake. It encourages a discourse on veneration and kitsch. It touches on the infinity of collecting. And why did St. Fab become so fabulously popular?

Belgian-born Francis Alÿs, architect-turned-artist, lives and works in Mexico City.



at the Fowler ...

A bouquet of **Latin America-themed exhibitions** is continuing or opening. Please see www.fowler.ucla.edu for details.

The **Fowler In Focus** gallery will show **Ancient Ceramics from Colombia**, part of the treasure trove of the Muñoz Kramer collection, recently acquired by LACMA and shared as a resource between LACMA and the Fowler (**opens for the public October 5th**).

the EAC annual dinner and silent auction ...

Contributors: Feelie Lee (contents); D. Goldenberg (photos)

The Fowler Museum was the venue of EAC's Annual Dinner and Silent Auction, the kick-off for the 2008/2009 membership year. Thank you, Marla Berns, to make the enchanting courtyard, the exhibition galleries and the beautiful roof terrace again available to EAC! It was a wonderful, balmy California night. Guest of honor was L.A.-based ceramic artist Dora De Larios whose 2009 exhibition at CAFAM is co-sponsored by EAC. The artist graciously contributed one of her Japanese textile-patterned porcelain plaques to the silent auction. New EAC member Stephen Kramer was specially introduced. The Muñoz Kramer collection, through its 2008 donation of some 700 pre-Columbian pieces, has provided a significant enrichment to the ancient America art scene at L.A. museums.



Close to 110 members and guests enjoyed the evening which included presentations by local museums. Attendance was slightly below the previous year, and so were the proceeds of the silent auction, a reflection of times of economic uncertainty.

Membership ratified the proposed changes to EAC's Board:

- Chair: Feelie Lee
- Vice Chair and Programs: Tamara Hoffman
- Secretary: Mark Johnson
- Treasurer: Kaija Keel
- Membership: Lyn Avins, Fred Backlar
- Other board members: Richard Baum, David Hayen, Julie Heifetz, Fern Wallace, Wolfgang Schlink, Larry Kent, Scott Keesling



Stay tuned for Tamara Hoffman's exciting program announcements!

A heartfelt "Thank You" to departing board members Christine Gregory, Stella Krieger, and John Ross for their many years of dedicated service to the EAC cause, and to Kaija Keel for her leadership in the past two years.

Comments, suggestions? Please email to Wolfgang Schlink, editor EAC e-news, at wolf@tribalearthgallery.com