



...the e-newsletter of the Ethnic Arts Council july/august 2008

late breaking news ...

Tribal Milestone: A Major Acquisition at LACMA

Great news for ethnic art enthusiasts: LACMA's CEO Michael Govan is making a quantum leap in his quest to define the museum as a true "House of Cultures". LACMA has announced a unique coup in the world of tribal art, the acquisition of 46 rare works of Oceanic art from the Taylor, MI based Masco Foundation. Masco Corp. executive chairman Richard Manoonigan had acquired the collection some 20 years ago.

The greatest strengths of the Sotheby's-brokered purchase are in the arts of Polynesia and Melanesia. Two signature pieces were carved in the early 1800s on Easter Island: A *moai kavakava* (male ancestor figure) and a *rapa* (dance paddle), the latter representing one of *the* classic images in the spectrum of tribal art. A third important piece - among so many others - is a Hawaiian *pahu* (drum) with impeccable provenance. Captain James Cook collected this pre-contact example on his third voyage in 1778.



For funding, Govan had to look no further than LACMA's Board of Trustees. A challenge grant by the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation was matched by several fellow LACMA trustees. The museum's total expenditure is unclear, but the price tag may well be in the \$10 million neighborhood. It is a win-win situation for LACMA and for the Masco Foundation. The former makes a profound statement to establish itself as a major bridgehead for ethnic art; the latter can focus on its core charitable causes, like supporting Habitat for Humanity, low income housing and local Michigan art and cultural activities.



Govan describes the purchase as "one of the most exciting acquisitions LACMA has ever made". He values the standalone "alternate aesthetic" in ethnic art beyond its ethnographical testimony or its influence on 20th century art, while he frequently highlights the latter. So, what's next for LACMA in the field of ethnic art? Africa? Well, stay tuned, though comparable opportunities are rare.

LACMA plans to exhibit the Oceanic purchases in late spring 2009. If you can't wait to take a peek, treat yourself to Alan Wardwell's great 282-pages book:

[Island Ancestors – Oceanic Art from the Masco Collection.](#)

Left: moai (detail); right: rapa (detail). Photography: Dirk Bakker



EAC awards the 2008 grants ...

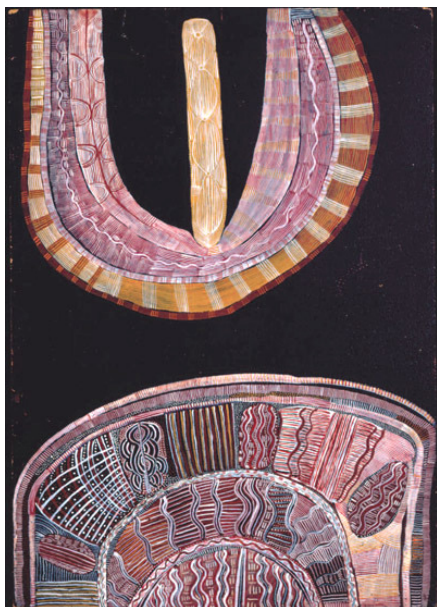
Compared to the news out of LACMA I almost feel humble to report on EAC's grants for the 2008 cycle. Yet EAC's bi-annual grants program is important. It helps fund exhibitions at our local museums as well as research projects, important publications, and related causes within the context of EAC's mission to advance the knowledge and appreciation of ethnic arts. Individual awards can reach up to \$10,000. Main sources for funding the grants are the proceeds of the silent auction at the EAC Annual Dinner and of course our membership fees.

On June 28, 2008 the EAC Board proudly and enthusiastically approved the following grant awards:

- **Fowler Museum at UCLA for**

ICONS OF THE DESERT: *Early Aboriginal Paintings from Papunya*

In 1971 Aboriginal men at the settlement of Papunya in Australia's Central Desert began to preserve ancestral stories (the Dreamings) with the help of newly introduced western art materials, like paint boards, canvas, and acrylic paint. This time marked the transition of "painting culture" on the human body or on the ground for sacred/secret proprietary rituals to a permanent medium and for export to other cultures. Simultaneously, the door to the international contemporary art market opened.



The traveling exhibition - the Fowler Museum will be the only West Coast stop from May 3 to August 2, 2009 - consists of 48 paintings by early masters of the Papunya painting movement like Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, Johnny Warrangkula Tjupurrula, and Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri. The unique show, a first for the U.S., is curated and the catalog written by major scholars of Aboriginal Australian art and culture. An extensive educational public program is planned alongside the exhibition.



Left: Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, Untitled, 1972; right: Long Jack Philipus Tjakamarra, Medicine Story, 1971. Images courtesy of the Fowler Museum at UCLA.

For more insight into the evolution of Aboriginal Australian art see article *Crossing the Divide*, EAC News, Summer 2007.



▪ **The Sarah Gilfillan Memorial Fund**

Established by the Fowler Museum at UCLA in honor of Sarah Gilfillan, its late Associate Director of Development, the fund **supports the study of the arts of Latin America**, one of Sarah's abiding passions. In her position at the Fowler Museum, Sarah helped raise significant funds to support exhibitions, education and public programs, special projects and general museum operations. She tragically died in a car accident in November 2007 at the age of 26.

▪ **CAFAM for**

Myths, Legends and Visions: A Fifty-Year Retrospective of the Art of Dora DeLarios

Born in Los Angeles to Mexican parents, Dora DeLarios today is one of America's most important ceramic artists. She often takes her creative inspiration from cross-cultural influences embodying the arts and cultures of Japan, Africa, and Central America. Her oeuvre takes ethnic and mythological imagery and melds it into her very own contemporary expression. DeLarios' body of work has been widely exhibited. It includes a commission for the White House and a large mural for the City of Nagoya, Japan, one of L.A.'s sister cities. The retrospective at CAFAM is scheduled for October 18, 2009 to January 2010.

Image courtesy of the artist, www.doradelarios.com.



▪ **LACMA for**

“The Mezcala Sculpture Research Project: Part 2 – Exhibition and Catalog Planning”

EAC's 2006 grant for Part 1 of the project helped launch a comprehensive investigation



into the Mezcala (500 BC – 1000 AD) sculptural tradition represented in LACMA's permanent collection. The project led to an important collaboration between senior staff of the Museo del Templo Mayor in Mexico City and LACMA. EAC's grant covers expenses incurred during the completion of the research and



in preparation for a landmark exhibition catalog. LACMA's exhibition on Mezcala sculpture is scheduled for September 2010

Left: Mask, obsidian; right: Temple Model, stone - Guerrero, Mexico (500 BC–1000 AD). Images courtesy of LACMA.



events, exhibitions, lectures, openings ...

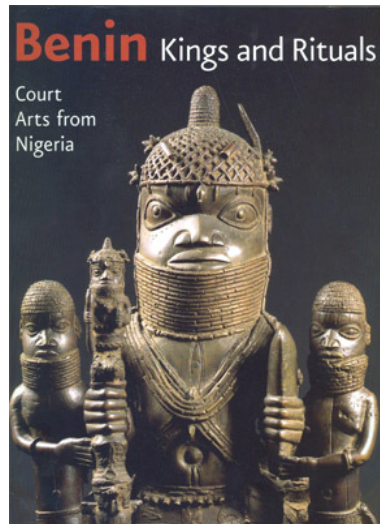
- **The Art Institute of Chicago**, more info at www.artic.edu

July 10 – September 21, 2008: Benin – Kings and Rituals: Court Arts from Nigeria

After stops in Vienna, Paris, and Berlin, the Art Institute is the exclusive American venue for this magnificent exhibition. Early European explorers were surprised by grand layout of Benin City, the size of the royal palace, and the many brass plaques on display. The latter, for the most part, ended up in British possession after a 1897 punitive campaign against the Benin rulers. Interestingly, one thought at the time was that the military endeavor would “pay for itself” once the art booty would be sold off.

The exhibition features some 220 works of art from the Benin kingdom in south-central Nigeria spanning a timeframe from the 15th to the 20th century. For a catalog, featuring 22 of the exhibited master works, see www.artinstituteshop.com.

Better yet, an extraordinary 535-pages book [Benin – Kings and Rituals](#) with many scholarly essays is available.



- **Santa Fé in August**, more info at www.whitehawkshows.com

- **August 15 – 17: The 25th Annual Antique Ethnographic Art Show**
- **August 18 – 20: The 30th Annual Invitational Indian Art Show**

Several EAC members are among the exhibitors at both shows.

!!! save the date: sunday, september 28, 2008 ... !!!

The EAC Annual Dinner and Silent Auction

Location: The Fowler Museum at UCLA

Invitations and additional information to follow in the next few weeks