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UCLA Fowler Museum to present

Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives

Opening September 30, 2006 (PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGE)



Los Angeles museum-goers will at last have an ongoing opportunity to enjoy one of America's most important collections of non-Western art. *Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives*—opening September 30, 2006 at UCLA's Fowler Museum—will feature approximately 250 of the finest objects from the Fowler's collections in a long-term exhibition that celebrates the richness of world arts and considers the roles these works of art play in peoples' lives.

The outstanding examples of global artistic achievement featured in *Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives* are primarily from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Americas, and they range in date from the first millennium B.C.E. to the present. The exhibition opens with five premier objects that give visitors a taste of the breadth and quality of what will follow:

- A striking mask dating from the late 19th–early 20th century from the island of New Ireland in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, used during memorial rites
- An intricately painted Chinese hand puppet (early–mid-20th century), utilized by a teacher to impart the importance of learning and literacy
- A spectacular 19th-century headdress by the Efut peoples of Nigeria, used to venerate ancestors and conduct initiations and funerals
- An ancient portrait vessel (c. 100–800 C.E.) by the Moche peoples of Peru, and
- An arresting 19th-century mask created by the Tsimshian peoples, British Columbia, Canada, worn during ceremonies to invoke the power of the generations (above).

Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives is organized thematically to encourage visitors to contemplate how art exacts wonder, imparts wisdom, and tangibly intersects with people's lives around the world. An introductory video directed by Peter Kirby enlivens the objects with first-person accounts by artists, scholars, religious practitioners, and people of various cultures who

offer insights into their relationships with the works of art on display. Three video kiosks offer more in-depth perspectives on artists, objects, and their performances. For example, video presentations explore the role of *katsina* dolls in the education of Hopi children, ancestral stories encoded in clan house paintings of Papua New Guinea, royal pageantry in Cameroon, Potlatch ceremonies on the Pacific Northwest Coast, and commentaries by ceramist Magdalene Odundo and *santos* carver Felix Lopez.

A central gallery within a gallery, entitled ‘Fowler in Focus,’ is dedicated to rotating installations of new acquisitions, sub-collections, and particular artistic genres. Changing three times per year, ‘Fowler in Focus’ will debut with *Flames of Devotion: Oil Lamps from South and Southeast Asia and the Himalayas*, featuring more than fifty intricate Indian oil lamps and incense burners. A same-titled book by Sean Anderson has been published and is distributed by the University of Washington Press (ISBN 0-9748729-3-8, paper, \$30). The subsequent ‘Fowler in Focus’ exhibition will follow approximately four months later featuring a selection of twenty-four Zambian masks. This space along with other rotating displays will ensure that *Intersections* will provide fresh experiences for repeat visitors.



The first main gallery communicates the central idea that an object’s appearance and power are intricately intertwined. Among the many objects displayed here is a compelling power figure (*nkisi nkondi*) dating from the 18th–19th century from the Yombe peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (left), bristling with nails that attest to oaths sworn in legal proceedings. A changing selection of handmade Asian-Pacific textiles explores how the impressive appearance of cloth serves in a wide range of cultural interactions. And an array of objects—including headrests from east and southern Africa, flower baskets from Japan, and domestic implements and furnishings from around the world—demonstrate how artistry and aesthetic excellence infuse even everyday objects with meaning and power.



The next section of the exhibition presents works that convey knowledge and communicate history. Such objects have long been used to evoke proverbial wisdom, to impart esoteric teachings, to celebrate family genealogies, or to express moral values. The motifs found on archaeological objects, for example, on the expertly painted vessels of the Moche of Peru that are displayed in this gallery (left), tell us about the practices and lives of historic peoples who left no written records. Other art objects, such as a beautiful selection of Burmese marionettes, serve as memory devices, designed to assist their owners with the recollection of people, events, and sacred places. Additionally, styles of dress and adornment on display here—including a collection of ikat-dyed silk textiles from Uzbekistan—convey aspects of personal and cultural identity. Different textile case studies will be regularly installed as another aspect of the exhibition’s insistence on change.

In many cultures, art plays an integral role in defining and asserting power. The works presented in this third section have been used to declare political authority, negotiate gender relationships,

or express status and prestige. It features a large, awe-inspiring 19th-century carved wooden royal mask (one of only a dozen known to exist) from the Bamileke peoples of Cameroon, along with other examples of intricately carved chief’s stools and headdresses, beaded gourds, figures, and masks from the Cameroon Grasslands kingdoms. Also on view are masks and headdresses made by First Nation peoples from the Pacific Northwest, and a large wall display of jewelry and other prestige objects from around the world.

A final gallery explores art objects that play a critical role in facilitating transformations. Here a selection of *retablos* from Mexico, a priest’s staff from Indonesia, power figures from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Japanese *ema* plaques show how objects are used to connect with the divine and to structure devotion both individually and communally. In almost all the cultures discussed in this section, death is viewed as a transition to the next world, and the art on display, such as ceramics from west Mexico and masks worn during mourning and funerary rites from Gabon and New Ireland, are often integral to this final transformation.

At the end of this section, an elegant ceramic vessel by Kenyan-born artist Magdalene Odundo, a large-scale painting by Haitian-American Edouard Duval-Carrié, an installation of life-sized *papier-mâché* figures by Mexican artist Felipe Linares, and the 1994 sculptural work, ‘Apartheid’s Funeral’ by South African artist Johannes Segogela show how contemporary works reflect dynamic social, political, and cultural transformations.

Throughout the exhibition, several ‘Objects of Encounter’ offer opportunities for more in-depth study, particularly of the ways artistic production in global cultures is constantly evolving and responding to contemporary realities. A box made by the Mangbetu/Zande peoples in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in late 19th–early 20th century provides a platform to consider how early encounters between Africans and Europeans created market demands that transformed artistic production. In another example, an elaborately beaded crown made in the 1990s by New York artist José Rodriguez for use in Afro-Cuban Yoruba initiation ceremonies reflects how African traditions are sustained and reinvented in the diaspora.

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Fowler Museum History

The Museum was established in 1963 by then UCLA Chancellor Franklin D. Murphy as the Museum and Laboratories of Ethnic Arts and Technology. Its first home was in the lower level of Haines Hall on the UCLA campus. The goal of this new museum was to consolidate the various collections of non-Western art and artifacts on campus. In addition to active collecting, the museum initiated research projects, fieldwork, exhibitions and publications. In 1971 the name was changed to the Museum of Cultural History and by 1975 its collections, in numbers

and in quality, ranked it among the top four university museums in the country and one of the finest museum collections of non-Western art in the world, a stature it retains to the present day. Our current facility was built especially for the Museum on UCLA’s north campus and features approximately 20,000-square-feet of exhibition space. It opened in September 1992, named in recognition of lead support by the Fowler Foundation and the family of collector and inventor Francis E. Fowler, Jr.

The Fowler's collections comprise more than 150,000 art and ethnographic and 600,000 archaeological objects representing prehistoric, historic, and contemporary cultures of Africa, Native and Latin America, and Asia and the Pacific. *Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives* marks the first time that audiences will have an ongoing opportunity to explore the highlights of these holdings. In addition, the Museum will continue its rotating temporary exhibition program.

The Sir Henry Wellcome Collection at the Fowler Museum

The Museum’s renowned permanent collection includes more than 30,000 objects assembled early in the last century by Sir Henry Wellcome, and given to the UCLA in 1965. This important collection forms the core of the Fowler’s African and Pacific holdings, and represents approximately one-third of the objects on display in *Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives*. Wellcome, a noted businessman, philanthropist, patron of science and cofounder of the UK pharmaceutical company Burroughs Wellcome, was a passionate collector of medical artifacts and objects relating to lifecycle rituals and wellness. Prior to his death in 1936 he amassed a remarkably large and diverse collection of more than one million objects.

Visiting the Fowler

Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives will be on long-term view at the Fowler Museum. The Fowler is open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5 p.m.; and on Thursdays, noon until 8 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. The Fowler Museum, part of UCLA’s School of the Arts and Architecture, is located in the north part of the UCLA campus. Admission is free. Parking is available for a maximum of \$8 in Lot 4. For more information, the public may call (310) 825-4361 or visit fowler.ucla.edu.

Related Events

Friday, September 29, 2006 6–8:30 pm

Members’ Preview and Party

Featuring live music by Cambodian rock band Dengue Fever. Admission for Fowler members is complimentary. Non-member tickets are \$30 per person (advance) or \$35 (at the door).
Membership and info: 310/206-0306.

Saturday, September 30, 2006 12–9 pm

OPENING DAY

1–4 pm

Kids in the Courtyard: Artventures in *Intersections*

Be the first to use the Fowler’s new resource for families visiting *Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives*. Artventures feature hands-on exercises—including looking activities, cooperative games, and a take-home Discovery Guide—to direct your family’s visit to the exhibition.

6–9 pm

Campus Open House

A shuttle will run between the Fowler and UCLA’s newly opened Eli and Edythe Broad Art Center faculty exhibitions SIXTEEN TONS from the department of Art and SECOND NATURES from the department of Design/Media Arts, so you can see all three exhibitions the same night. Light refreshments in the Davis Courtyard.

Saturday, October 14, 2006 2 pm

Lecture by Pratapaditya Pal: ‘Metal and Fire: The Lamp as Object and Metaphor’

Lamps are an indispensable part of devotional practices for many religious rituals. ‘Flames of Devotion,’ the inaugural Fowler in Focus installation, presents a collection of remarkably designed oil lamps from South and Southeast Asia, donated to the museum by the Pal Family. Noted scholar and collector Pratapaditya Pal discusses a selection of important examples as aesthetic objects and spiritual metaphors, and considers the rich iconography of the works.

Sunday, October 15, 2006 1–4 pm

Kids in the Courtyard: Diwali Festival

See the oil lamps featured in the Fowler in Focus gallery of *Intersections* and get ready to celebrate Diwali, the Indian festival of light. Try some Indian sweets, tattoo your hand with henna, and create radiant tin-can lanterns to illuminate the entrance to your home in this afternoon of activities for families.

Thursday, October 19, 2006 7 pm

Fowler Outspoken with W. J. T. Mitchell:

‘What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images’

Intersections highlights the Fowler’s commitment to examining how art *works*, in our society, throughout the world, and from past to present. Leading cultural theorist W. J. T. Mitchell offers his approach for understanding visual culture today. Drawing from his recent publication, What Do Pictures Want?, Mitchell investigates the visual arts, cartoons (including the notorious Danish caricature), and film to uncover why images are often treated as if they were living organisms, capable of mutating into new forms, infecting the consciousness of those who view them, and feeling pain or inflicting it on their beholders.