

beautiful—simply and elegantly designed, and warmly lighted. Even more appealing was the pale blue (almost turquoise) felt material lining the cases and complementing the earth tones of many of the objects. I was therefore surprised when an indigenous cultural practitioner described the color as “too passive.”

Initially, I was content to revel in my observations of the objects’ visual and material beauty since there was no interpretive text to redirect my attention. This was before I walked through the exhibition with knowledgeable colleagues or engaged them in extensive conversations, and before the arrival of the catalogs weeks later. Once armed with more insights, especially those of indigenous scholar-practitioners, I began reading against my own experiences. More importantly, I recognized I was doing precisely what they feared most—apprehending the works as art objects, appreciating them not within specific cultural contexts, but as decontextualized objects, as floating “aesthetic” signifiers. This is not to discount the importance of the exhibition, but to emphasize one consequence of its curatorial strategy.

In a provocative essay, Svetlana Alpers has discussed the “museum effect”—how objects on display are turned into works of art by isolating them from their worlds and subjecting them to “attentive looking.” Ironically, the latter can make it hard to see “cultural significance” versus “visual distinctions” (“Museums as a Way of Seeing,” in *Exhibiting Cultures*, edited by Ivan Karp and others, 1991, 26–27, 30). But why worry about this? Scholar-practitioner Momiala Kamahale explained

the urgency of the problem after viewing the HAA exhibition: Because Hawai‘i is colonized, the museum has an obligation to improve its strategies for educating the public about cultural practices from indigenous points of view as a commitment to decolonization. Obviously, this is a challenge not only for the Honolulu Academy of Arts, but also for many settler institutions in Hawai‘i, including my own.

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Jolika Collection of New Guinea Art, de Young Museum, San Francisco, California. Opened October 2005.

Acclaim and excitement greeted the Jolika Collection of New Guinea Art of John and Marcia Friede when the de Young museum in San Francisco reopened in October 2005. But by July 2006, the enthusiasm had flickered and fulminated because of clashes over national cultural property exported without valid permits. There are no accusations of looting against John Friede himself; he had bought from dealers, traveling to Papua New Guinea only once, in 1981.

Despite the jangle of discordant voices, there may be an important accomplishment. A practical strategy is emerging, proposed by the National Museum of Papua New Guinea. The compromise would open access to the works within Papua New Guinea. The Jolika, and later the de Young when it receives this promised gift of over 3,000 objects, could share items with the National Museum. This is in

a climate in which the Metropolitan Museum and the Getty Museum are surfacing limply from arduous lawsuits requiring the return of objects plundered from Italy and Greece.

There will be access to the de Young for contemporary PNG artists selected for a visiting fellows program, and there are plans for exchanges of artworks between schoolchildren in both countries.

The Jolika is the most important private collection of objects from Papua New Guinea and West Papua in the world. It is an immense contribution to bring together works that were formerly dispersed and make them accessible for viewing and research. The first installation of the works embodies the transformation of functional objects in culturally specific ritual contexts into artworks for contemplation as masterpieces. Ceremonial tools efficacious in spiritual and everyday life, material embodiments of philosophies and cosmologies about creation, fertility, birth, love, war, death, continuity through ancestors, protections against danger, and healing, have now become nonutilitarian by definition. Yet had the works been displayed in an ethnographic museum, there may have been stinging criticism about separating them from an art space.

“Art,” in the singular in the title of the collection, runs the risk of homogenizing works from societies in Papua New Guinea that speak 800 different languages. The exhibit focuses on the Sepik, the Papuan Gulf, and Milne Bay Province, with some objects from the Highlands. It includes only one relatively recent item indicating outside contact: a war shield from the

1960s featuring the Phantom comic-book character. New Ireland is not part of the collection. Few women’s works are included.

Friede acknowledges that his is the largest collection of West Papua objects outside of Dutch museums. It contains objects from Geelvink Bay, Lake Sentani, and the Asmat. Yet the omission of West Papua in the title of the collection matches an absence of discussion about its national cultural property. There is reason for concern, because in his 10 February 2006 public lecture at the de Young, Friede mentioned a scientist’s simply gathering up skulls that he happened on in a cave while conducting unrelated research. These skulls are part of the Friede collection. Opportunities to repair the absence of information and discussion about West Papuan cultural property must be possible in the Netherlands, the former colonial power. Colonized and oppressed by Indonesia, struggling desperately for autonomy, West Papua is enfolded under the very Papua New Guinea that, in July 2006, refused to accept refugees seeking asylum.

The display of the works in the de Young installation is dramatic. The cavernous, low-lit space recalls, intentionally or not, the filtered light of a ceremonial men’s house. Casting their immediate surroundings into deep shadow, spotlights focus directly on masks, spirit boards, spirit canoes, ritual headdresses—and copulating figures that present opportunities for viewers’ projections about idealized exotic sexuality. Skull racks and suspension hooks are imbued with an awe of the strange.

The atmosphere also evokes what

the Surrealists sought in the art of Papua New Guinea: engagement with images of dreams, and violence they found primitive, elemental, disturbing, and desirable. Quai Branly, the museum that French President Jacques Chirac sponsored as his legacy, opened in Paris in July 2006. Mired in a miasma of criticism focused on perpetuating colonialism and on separating the arts of Africa and Oceania from European works, that museum is condemned particularly for its lighting: mazes in darkness broken by intense illumination of individual works. Metaphorically this represents a jungle, evoking the primitive in implicit distinction from the civilized. The Jolika is not free of some element of spectacle, but had the collection been displayed in brightly lit conventional cases, critics might have complained about erasing context.

Despite the new visiting fellows program, antiquity is a priority in the collection. When contemporary PNG artists visit from overseas, typically they face the expectation, already familiar from tourists, that they perpetuate “pickled” versions of their traditions. Experimentation with hybrid forms and new media can be limited by the pressures in the host country for artists to remain representative of their own national backgrounds rather than to venture into current experimental art spaces where they are visiting. The active contemporary art scene of Papua New Guinea receives no recognition in the de Young display or the catalog. Friede’s focus on antiquity and his lack of interest in contemporary works can enshrine a primitivism

that dismisses peoples of today as inferior inheritors of a glorified past in a disdained present. Perceptions of unchanging timelessness separate them through an exoticism, an orientalism, of distance and difference, from those who live in industrialized sophisticated cities. This perspective obliterates awareness of the globalizing connections that link everyone to current, human, commonality.

The two-volume exhibit catalog, awarded the 2006 American Association of Museums prize for design, is *New Guinea Art: Masterpieces from the Jolika Collection of Marcia and John Friede* (Milan: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in association with 5 Continents Editions SRL, 2005). Volume 1 has 622 pages, and volume 2 has 206; it is expensive at US\$170 (cloth) and US\$110 (trade paper). The catalog is a work of connoisseurship. Friede’s passion is to see these works accepted into the canon of universal aesthetics. His epigraph in volume 1, quoted from a dealer friend, epitomizes his fervor for collecting: “Ah John! Toujours la chasse, John” [Ah John! Always the pursuit, John] (14).

Volume 1 features full-page photographs of the works and an introductory essay by Friede about assembling the collection. Volume 2 has Robert Welsch’s fascinating history of collecting in the region since 1870. Dirk Smidt, former director of the National Museum in Papua New Guinea, now curator at Leiden, has an evocative essay about the works and their active ceremonial power. There is no mention of issues of national cultural property. (Yet on 9 April 2006, journalist Rex Dalton, in the online

edition of *Nature* [440, 722–723], reported that in 1972, working with the PNG government, Smidt himself along with ethnoarchaeologist Brian Egloff closed exports from Papua New Guinea one weekend when Smidt was still museum director there, in order to confiscate substantial illegal exports that were intended to be smuggled out of the country.)

Philippe Peltier, of Quai Branly, writes a wonderful history of the impact of these works in Europe. They were pursued first by the Dadaists, with their goal to go beyond the rational, then by the Surrealists. Gregory Hodgins, who supervised the dating of the items, discusses the problematic aspects of dating in his catalog essay. The use of radiocarbon dating for this collection is an unexpected innovation. The works were originally regarded as relatively recent. However, when 143 were tested, strikingly early dates were assigned. One mask, Yesindima, was dated to the seventh century CE (Christian Era); 33 objects were dated earlier than 1670 CE.

No Papua New Guineans or West Papuans have written for these volumes, and there are specialists who might have. The only Papua New Guinean photographed, a guide when the Friedes visited, is the one person unnamed in the photograph. None appears to have been consulted in the installation of the works.

Volume 2 includes descriptions of each object written by John Friede. This is a substantial work of scholarship and reveals an immense bibliographic effort. Unfortunately, there is no index for tracking citations. Most objects are annotated with informa-

tion about expeditions that collected them, who acquired them, their exhibition histories, and catalogs citations, but Yesindima, the early mask, lacks such details.

The pragmatic strategy to deal with this national cultural property developed during the spring of 2006 at the cost of some vigorous verbal disagreements. Strong voices have advocated their visions for protecting the works, with ardor about their particular principles and priorities.

That Yesindima had no valid export permit was identified in the *Oceanic Arts Society Newsletter* (August 2005, 8) by Barry Craig, former curator at the National Museum, now at the South Australian Museum. By February 2006, Christina Hellmich, recently appointed Jolika curator, was communicating with the National Museum about Yesindima as well as two other works that Craig had by then identified, which I had reported and sent to her in an unpublished manuscript.

The problems went public when Dalton announced in his *Nature* article that the illegally exported items might total nine. Dalton quoted Craig, Sebastine Haraha of the National Museum, Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Michael Somare, and Ambassador to the United States Evan Paki as calling for the return of protected items. Wayne Heathcote, a dealer who has been suggested as the exporter, declined to be interviewed. Dirk Smidt, who had entered several of the nine items on the cultural property file, acknowledged that national property was in the collection but declined further comment.

Friede denied knowing that any of

the items were national cultural property and said that he anticipated that if any items were confirmed stolen they would be returned. He was quoted in the *Nature* article as saying, “Dealers don’t tell you where they get them. It really doesn’t matter a great deal” and that repatriating any of the objects would be “crazy.” Friede stated that they were better off in San Francisco. He implied that because the PNG National Museum needed improved security and resources, its new board with a new budget might benefit from the controversy.

None of the spokespeople has advocated immediate repatriation. Craig emphasized that the appropriate custodians of the works might not be the museum, but rather the local groups who have conserved them—and according to the carbon dating, have done so for many centuries. Safeguarding the works is a challenge not only for the National Museum.

Security has also become perilous in the United States. In June 2006 a federal court upheld a decision to seize and auction the ancient cuneiform tablets loaned to the Oriental Institute in Chicago by the government of Iran, to compensate five Americans injured in a terrorist attack in the Middle East.

Dalton’s article also revealed that research on the collection might be hampered, quoting a Smithsonian scientist who said privately: “We wouldn’t go near it now.” This is all the more poignant because Friede is also a benefactor of the Smithsonian.

Friede financed Haraha’s journey from the National Museum to inspect the nine artifacts in early April. John E Buchanan Jr, director of the de

Young, affirmed the museum’s record of repatriation, saying he could see it being repeated.

On 11 April, Daniel Waswas, the first PNG visiting artist at the de Young who had by that time returned home, circulated an e-mail message supporting Friede’s philanthropy and the crucial importance of his building the collection. But when the local *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier* that day reported an impounded shipment of artifacts being smuggled out, Waswas wrote in his e-mail: “My heart really bleeds for this nation.”

On 13 April, the *Post-Courier* reported how shocked Waswas was about the importance and the prices of the works at a Tribal Arts show in San Francisco. He said, “Sooner or later everything will go out of this country and there will be nothing left for future generations.”

The proposal to handle the national cultural property problems by sharing objects in the Jolika collection was announced on 21 April, in a formal letter from Ambassador Paki. It criticized Dalton’s article as unbalanced, celebrated the Jolika as showcasing PNG art in North America, and exonerated Friede as innocently acquiring national cultural property, calling the collection an “ideal act of preservation.” “If this generous couple,” he wrote, “feared that some day their integrity and reputation as avid PNG art collectors and philanthropists might be questioned by some overzealous reporter or anthropologist, they might have simply avoided purchasing the PNG masterpieces.” He continued: “It is thus irresponsible and perhaps defamatory, in our view, to point to a few pieces in the Jolika

collection and imply that a man who is not only of extreme repute in the art community but a philanthropist may have been involved in illegal exports of NCP [national cultural property] objects or may have knowingly acquired them from others.”

On 24 April, a *San Francisco Chronicle* article headlined “War Drums Pound over de Young Display” said the museum was the “latest big-name art center to find itself answering embarrassing questions about showcasing looted treasures.”

On 3 June, the *Los Angeles Times* published an article by Lee Romney, “The De Young Dilemma” with the lead line, “Papua New Guinea claims the San Francisco museum doesn’t have a right to items in an exquisite collection. It adds a twist in the debate about cultural treasures.” “The real issue is a moral one,” Romney quoted Craig as saying, because Friede appears to be “in receipt of stuff that’s been illegally exported. That can’t be OK by anybody’s standards.” Craig also suggested, Romney wrote, that saying the pieces are better off in the hands of the de Young is like arguing “that a bunch of Yanks going into the Yucatan . . . and chain-sawing some stuff out of some Mayan temples and putting them in the Metropolitan is a better way of preserving Mayan culture.” To Craig, Friede represents “Americans of a certain wealth pattern who find their immortality by donating . . . to art museums.”

Royalty, military victors, religious authorities, political rulers, and colonial conquerors assembled the world’s major museum collections. Rich people in the United States, whatever the

sources of their wealth, can expect that within a generation or two their fortunes may become dignified by philanthropy. Through matrilineal descent, Friede is the scion of a branch of the Annenberg line. Building on donations by his ancestors, Friede’s promised gift burnishes the family’s national eminence in the arts. The Jolika, named for the three Friede children (an abbreviation of John, Lisa, Karen), received a home that graces the de Young. The de Young needed private contributors to survive.

Friede is perhaps apprehensive that anthropologists, whom he described to Romney as “Marxist types,” will have a hand in nationalizing his private property. He told her, “I am certainly not sending back pieces that I bought with my money or my children’s money. I am not going to give them away.” Friede attributed the “clamor” about the national cultural property in his collection to “Australian expatriates” (of whom Craig was one when he worked at the PNG National Museum) “who have a very paternalistic attitude toward the country and believe it’s their responsibility to speak for the poor little natives.”

Friede sets up a dilemma about who may speak for the works. If an outsider is given no credibility in speaking on behalf of national cultural property simply because he is an outsider regardless of his expertise about the works, there is a risk that there could be a loss of what may not be valued at the time by the local people because they are preoccupied with developing their society in ways dominated by global influences. Later, however, the local people may return

to treasuring and safeguarding their works. In the interval of local undervaluing of their own achievements, outsiders who are alert to the international trade in artifacts can possibly make some contribution to safeguarding national cultural property that locals may be willing to sell to outsiders for ludicrously low prices.

I remember encountering the same predicament when I was doing fieldwork on Rarotonga in 1971. There a local man said to me, "Don't take your research report on health too seriously. It will end up in a copra sack and rats will eat it. What would really help us is recording our traditional medicine. The younger generation are too busy learning English to be interested. Just wait two generations and they will be desperate to learn about it."

Forbidding an outsider to speak about national cultural property may prevent its protection. But speaking on their behalf can appear to patronize Papua New Guineans as naive, disempowered victims. The local voices diverge about priorities that may change over time. Waswas's heart bleeds about the hemorrhage of exports of significant works—the latest case was a shipment impounded on 24 April. Evan Paki's position embodies the role of an ambassador. Romney's article quotes him: "Ultimately we want to promote Papua New Guinea art and artists in the U.S. It's a huge market." Romney reported that Paki had requested electronic copies of the cultural property list from Papua New Guinea, and that

Paki had written in a recent letter to de Young Museum Director Buchanan and Simon Poraituk, acting director of the National Museum, that "it appears the appropriate circumstances do not presently exist" for repatriation. Romney also reported that Poraituk told the local press that his museum wants the nine pieces of national cultural property back.

Many more than the nine objects may be problematic, and that has yet to be addressed. Brian Egloff, who is president of the International Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management, pointed out to me in a 5 September 2006 e-mail that, as a colony of the newly formed Commonwealth of Australia, Papua had antiquities/national cultural property legislation dating back to 1913, and New Guinea, as a mandated territory of the League of Nations, had it dating back to 1922. What this means is that the majority of the material in the Friede collection would have been subject to transfer, purchase, and export controls.

If one gives credence to local meanings, and to Surrealists, there are some very dangerous objects in the Jolika display. Perhaps they have been working their sorcery. Bruised by the vehemence of the controversy, the reputation of the Jolika needs a rebirth. Yesindima is a healing mask. It might be time to invoke her power.

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de Young Museum " 50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Dr, San Francisco, California 94118 " rated 4.6 based on 9,009 reviews "I would give 20 stars if I could, breath... I would give 20 stars if I could, breath taking exhibits "Bouquets to Art Exhibit" combining art with flowers was simply mind blowing. The flowers echoed the art and artifacts exquisitely! Every single bouquet was a piece of art in itself and were outrageously creative and in many instances could have stood alone. Thank you for an amazing day. Lancelot Francis recommends de Young Museum. 8 March . Rotating exhibitions grace this iconic location. A gathering place to bring people of like mind and spirit to see art from around the world. Highly recommended if you're into art or design. Young At Art Museum is electrified to present Hi-Tech/Lo-Tech, a survey of the relationship between art and technology. This eight-month line of programming will evolve over its tenure and span the entire museum. The museum will serve as a central point for these parties to exhibit art, lead talks and conduct workshops providing participants with the opportunity to examine a variety of exciting ideas and their applications in art and technology. Most recently, Guerra de la Paz was commissioned by Wooyoungmi Paris to create a body of new sculptural works in collaboration with their 2014 Fall/Winter Campaign, beginning with a solo exhibition at their MANMADE - Wooyoungmi Lifestyle Headquarters in Seoul, Korea.