

Grove Gallery to show tribal art from Papua New Guinea "Sanguma/Masali"

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GROVE GALLERY TO SHOW TRIBAL ART FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Ritual masks, a canoe with an engraved crocodile prow, decorative dance costumes, and a nine-foot snake totem are among the tribal artifacts from the Sepik River and other provinces of Papua New Guinea to be exhibited from Sept. 22-Oct. 24 at the University of California, San Diego's Grove Gallery.

An opening reception for the show, which is called "Sanguma/Masali," will be held from 6-8 p.m. on Sept. 22.

The artifacts are part of a personal collection belonging to Leslie Anne Martin, who was born in Papua New Guinea. She owns an importing business in Perris, near Riverside, California, and has put to use her broad knowledge of tribal art, importing strictly from Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

More than 20 artifacts will be shown, including some fairly large pieces. "This show is an excellent example of the kind of ethnic art the gallery dedicates itself to exhibiting to students and the community," said Ron Carlson, director of the UC Crafts Center/Grove Gallery.

"All of the artifacts in Miss Martin's collection are contemporary. Objects do not last very long in that climate, since bugs eat them or they rot quickly," Carlson said. "So, when an item is no longer useful, the shaman puts a spirit into a new piece and the old one becomes powerless."

Martin said the tribes people place great ritual importance in the items they use in their daily lives. Each item has a particular use, and is empowered by a spirit which protects the user from evil.

A canoe from Kambot Village, designed for family use, is carved with a crocodile head and has intricate designs along its sides. A large platter from Kriambit Village, used during feasts, also has the crocodile motif.

Also to be shown from Kriambit Village is a long-nosed figure, one of two major spirit figures of the people who live near the Blackwater Lakes in the Sepik River area. This spirit lived with the tribe, and was considered to be exceptionally talented in battle. He used his disappearing abilities, it is said, to cause diversions and confusion among the enemy's ranks.

Platters of many kinds were popular among New Guinean tribes. Some were used for feasting and others for carrying objects of importance. For example, clansmen of Govermas Village from Blackwater Lakes used a "Bride Price Carrier" to make a series of bridal payments on behalf of the groom, carrying them to the payment ceremony on decorative wooden boards. Decorative boards also were displayed in men's spirit houses, and an example will be shown from Biwat Village on the Yuat River.

A 10-foot-high orator's stool will also be included in the show. These stools are the focus for formal and informal meetings, but are not used for sitting upon. The leader and tribesmen gather around the stool to discuss tribal matters, from the most important topics, to who will cut the grass along the path that leads to market. When

a meeting is desired by one of the clansmen, he leaves a beetle nut carved with his mark on top of the seat of the stool.

For more information contact Shendl Diamond, 534-2637. The Grove Gallery is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, and from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturday.

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