

UCSD's Grove Gallery to present exhibition of Indonesian folk art

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(Editor's note: Photo art is available.)

UCSD'S GROVE GALLERY TO SHOW FOLK ART FROM INDONESIA

The Indonesian's rich and colorful mythology has fired the imagination of generations of native folk artists. From September 20 through October 22 the Grove Gallery at the University of California, San Diego will present "Bagus Indonesia," an exhibition of more than 100 works by Indonesian artisans.

A public reception will be held at the gallery on Sept. 30, from 6-8 p.m.

The bagus or "good" Indonesian collection to be shown at the Grove Gallery belongs to Leslie Anne Martin of Vista. Martin was born and raised in Wewak, Papua New Guinea, and was educated in PNG and Australia. Martin has imported art from her native country and Indonesia since 1984.

At a storehouse belonging to Martin one feels transported to another world. The articles to be exhibited in the Grove Gallery are singled out and explained: Hanging on the wall are several hundred dance masks from throughout Indonesia, each having a specific meaning and function. From the placid facade of Buddha to the alarming face of a Singa deity, the expressions demand attention. Several of these masks will appear in the show.

One of the fascinating creatures made by the Indonesian artisans is a carved, wooden Garuda with removable wings and tail. The sculpture is painted in many rich colors, and the wings and tail have wooden plumes at the tips. The teeth are bared and pointy, and parts of the face are highlighted with gold leaf.

The Garuda, Martin says, is the winged creature which carries the god Rama on its back. A dance costume of a witch, the fierce Ringda, has long horsehair tresses and a scary face.

From Lombok, Martin has a cache of storage chests and dowry chests fashioned from sturdy palm material and decorated with trceries of the tambu shells-also referred to as money shells.

Baskets woven by Lombok men from seaweed are regarded as valuable gifts, and kept for the storage of special items. Earrings and rings from Torajaland are made of silver and brass, and are intricately fashioned.

Hindu storyboards are carved from wood and tell the stories of the myths and actions of the gods of Bali. Also from Bali are Topeng dance masks, wonderful rod puppets called "Wayang Golek," and huge bronze cowbells the size of a football.

In Singapore, dangerous-looking carved temple guardians, called "Singa Rajah," are employed to guard such important structures as banks. The Burmese also have a deity used in a similar fashion to guard their bridges. They are called "Boma."

Dragons are considered the world over to be the princes of the mythological animal kingdom. The Indonesian culture feels a special regard for the dragon, which they call "Naga." Martin's collection of Nagas come in many different sizes and colors, but the message is clear: "Beware." Their duties range from hovering protectively over a baby's crib, to guarding sacred edifices, and many will be on display.

For information on the "Bagus Indonesia" show, contact the Grove Gallery at 534-2637. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Parking on the weekends is free.

PHOTO OUTLINE:

Torajaland jewelry--an antique brass pendant, fashioned in the shape of a serpent, is one of many kinds of fine Indonesian folk jewelry to be shown in the "Bagus Indonesia" show at the UCSD Grove Gallery, from September 20 through October 22.

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