



IMAGES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
DELORES HISTIA. Acoma, life dates unknown
Jar circa 1950s
Promised Gift of Gretchen and Nelson Grice. PG2003.63.55
Bowl late 19th century
Pomo, Central Valley, California Coiled natural plant materials and beads
Promised Gift of Gretchen and Nelson Grice. PG2003.63.14
Fantasy Bird Mask 20th century
Promised Gift of Gretchen and Nelson Grice. PG2004.105.186
Ceremonial Huipil late 19th century
Mam, Todos Santos, Department of Huehuetenango
Gift of Gretchen and Nelson Grice. 2001.85.16

Passionate Journey: *The Grice Collection of Native American Art MMA*

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ommencing July 18, the Mint Museum of Art will host “Passionate Journey: The Grice Collection of Native American Art” under the direction of curator Dr. Dorie Reents-Budet. The exhibition will run until October 18 featuring 200 works of contemporary Native

American ceramics and early 20th century baskets, modern Maya textiles from southern Mexico and Guatemala, as well as modern performance masks from Mexico. These art forms have a legacy dating back over one thousand years and illustrate expressions of native traditions that still survive in the United States, Mexico and Guatemala.

There are as many as 21 tribes representing Native American Pueblos from New Mexico and Arizona in the

Grice collection of pottery. The diversity of texture, color, form and style of decoration is almost endless, and therefore makes Pueblo pottery especially appealing to collectors. The Acoma tribe is known for its white clay and slip; the Zia tribe for red clay and the Hopi tribe for yellow ware. Interestingly, the potters dig their own clay from the ground in

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The Mint Museum
Docents

their respective Southwestern territorial regions. Even the paints are prepared by hand-grinding rocks or clays which produce the resulting variety of colors. Virtually all of the Pueblo have reinterpreted traditional forms by creating new styles or reviving old ones.

The Acoma Pueblo artists nestled on top of a mesa in the northwest corner of New Mexico are renowned for their Native American pottery. They live in an area called "Sky City," which is believed to have been established in the 12th century, making it possibly the oldest continuously inhabited community in the United States. One of the featured Acoma artists, Rachel Concho, is consistently pursued by collectors for her work even before it has been displayed. She laughingly once stated, "I could be driving a Mercedes if I sold my pots for a high price." But she has denied herself that wealth, claiming, "It's not about the money, pottery-making is like therapy and comes from my heart and I want people to buy the pottery and enjoy it." Concho, who learned from her mother, gathers clay from a sacred spot on a mountain, hand-coiling her pots and then polishes with a stone passed down from her grandmother. Her works of art contain intricate geometric motifs depicting animals and humans possessing a contemporary feel, yet they perpetuate Concho's roots.

Another artist, Tonita Nampeyo, a Hopi born around 1860, will also have some work on display. The Hopi people trace their history in Arizona back more than 2000 years and, according to legend, their ancestors may have migrated from as far away as South America. In the 14th century new clays and firing techniques were developed by Hopi potters, yielding a superb, smoother and more dense texture. The Hopi experimentation and daring departure in design symmetry and incorporation of life forms will be evident in the tradition carried on by Nampeyo's examples in the exhibition.

Beyond the Native American pottery, there will be modern Maya textiles, early 20th century baskets, and some modern performance masks from Mexico. Janet Brody Esser, Former art history professor at San Diego State University who studied the Mexican mask culture, has been quoted as saying "It is important to understand

there is intelligence behind these masks and they are not used by primitive people, even though they are poor by our standards they are rich in culture." So it is also important that we know that a primary reason the Grices chose The Mint Museum for showing their collection was because it is complemented by The Mint Museum's ancient American art collection, the historic costume collection and North American pottery collections. *Passionate Journey* bridges a historical and perceptual gap between indigenous American cultures and the early European-based cultural developments in North and Central America.

For in-depth information about this exhibition, please visit the Mint Wiki page at <http://mintwiki.pbwiki.com/>

~John Mussman

VantagePoint VIII *Bob Trotman: Business as Usual*



CHORUS: SINKING FEELING
2001, KAITLIN 2008, JANE 2008,
MARTIN 2008.
Bob Trotman.

Business as Usual is an installation of 10 carved and painted wooden sculptures by North Carolina sculptor Bob Trotman. This is the eighth presentation in the *VantagePoint* contemporary art series on view in the Dickson Gallery at MMA through November 14, 2009.

Although the sculptures represent men and women in contemporary business attire, none of them are complete figures. Four of the figures are designated

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Chorus. Only their heads and shoulders appear above the floor as their arms raised above their heads and fearful expressions plead for help. Are they sinking or rising? The five figures of *Committee* are each busts on pedestals. With their changeable eyes and mouths they can be the stern boss, the compliant “yes person” or perhaps a joker. The third piece placed off to the side features a group of male and female legs and feet still in business attire under a shroud or tarp and is called *Cover Up*. The sculptures were made over the last five years, yet these enigmatic figures with their cracks and patches resonate in today’s economy.

In a statement about *Business as Usual* Trotman says, “The tradition of wooden figures comes down to us from three main sources: carvings of the saints, ships’ figureheads, and the so-called ‘show figures’ that were used outside shops in the 19th century or in circus displays. These were all a form of popular rather than high art. This was art that was supposed to speak directly to a mass audience. I want to keep that populist flavor, but inject something ironic and subversive into it. I want my work to have some of the appearance of folk art, but I want it to go places that folk art doesn’t. I want it to ask questions, to have a disturbing edge: Kafkaesque Americana, if you will.”

Bob Trotman was born in Winston-Salem in 1947, the son of a banker. He received a B.A. degree in philosophy from Washington and Lee University. In the 1970s Trotman taught himself the craft of woodworking and learned how to put pieces of wood together to make furniture. After mastering the techniques, he began paying more attention to design and attended the Penland School of Crafts. In the 1980s his furniture and craft work took him to New York, where visits to galleries showed the blurring of the line between craft and art. Trotman’s work began the transformation from furniture with anthropomorphic elements to sculpture with elements of furniture in it. While at Penland in 1997 he submitted a carved figure to the prominent contemporary sculptor Martin Puryear, who declared it a sculpture. Furniture was left behind and Trotman made the leap to sculpture. This leap was influenced by his study of the existential philosophy of Kafka, Kierkegaard

and Sartre. In a 2005 interview Trotman noted that Existentialism “was very big among the post World War II Beat generation. It emphasized the freedom of man and the responsibility to make choices, decisive choices for yourself, and also the absurdity of life.....It is exhilarating but it’s also a source of anguish and vertigo.” These comments not only reflect on Trotman’s personal choices but also on the art he creates. He says, “I want to present the people as real human beings. It’s like they are more human than they know they are, but that they are struggling to keep up middle-class appearances of being this person that they think they are supposed to be.”

*Sources: Louise Wells Cameron Art Museum
Robert Trotman oral history interview conducted
by Carla Hanzal for the Archives of American Art,
Smithsonian Institution*

For in-depth information about this exhibition, please visit the Mint Wiki at <http://mintwiki.pbwiki.com/>

~Rosemary Glatzel

ART CORNER: MMA

Focus on the Permanent Collection Portrait of Nicholas Sprimont and His Family

The placement of the *Portrait of Nicholas Sprimont and His Family* by an unknown artist in the Alexander Gallery next to a display case of Chelsea porcelain offers several levels of teaching opportunities. Children love to match the different vases in the painting with the ones in the case.

The painting is more than a family snapshot. It is a clever marketing piece painted around 1759-1760 to coincide with the introduction of the newest vases of the Chelsea porcelain factory. The arrangement of the figures with Nicholas seated in the center, his wife hovering behind him while her younger sister arrives with a finished vase, describes the family’s relationships. The vases seem to display not only the newest models with their various shapes but also illustrate the stages of manufacture.

This gives the children a chance to find the vase in the earliest stage, the one with just the paint before it is glazed and the finished product.

Nicholas Sprimont was the founder of Chelsea porcelain. A native of Liege, in Flanders, he was born in 1716. Nicholas Sprimont was a Huguenot and originally a silversmith by trade.

He relocated to the village of Chelsea in the potteries section of England in the 1740s and by 1747 was a full-time manufacturer of soft-paste porcelain. His personal porcelain creations are likely to have been produced between 1742 and 1748. Although volumes have been written about the porcelain, the history of the factory is sketchy. The painting and Sprimont's auction catalogues have been used to date some of the vases. Production seems to have faded by 1764. The factory was revived by 1770 under new ownership as Chelsea-Derby.

Sources: J.V.G. Mallet at the Linnean Society Rooms on 18th April 1998 Transactions of the English Ceramic Circle The Antique Bible Jerome Thompson.

~Rosemary Glatzel

ART CORNER: MMCD

Focus on the Permanent Collections *Soundsuit* by Nick Cave

Nick Cave's *Soundsuits* are fabulous creations made of thrift store finds, twigs, plastic bags, discarded thotchkes, and just about anything else that strikes his fancy. Children love seeing his work and guessing the materials. The soundsuits focus on the fusion between fiber textile art and modern dance to create manifestations of the wearer's physical energy. Cave's shamanistic soundsuits have been described in the Boston Phoenix as "lavish, strange, beautifully-crafted outfits resembling mash-ups of African tribal ceremonial dress, Ku Klux Klan robes, Roman Catholic clergy vestments, yetis, Star Wars aliens, plumed and sequined carnival costumes, and fabulous drag queen gowns."

In an interview with Greg Cook, Chicago-based Cave poignantly describes the moment he created his first soundsuit:



NICK CAVE, American. 1959-
Soundsuit 2007
metal, beads, sequins, metal Victorian flowers
Museum Purchase: Founders' Circle Fund. 2009.19.1A-00000

"When the Rodney King incident happened. I was reading in the paper about how the police sort of brought description to him. You know they were talking about, I can't remember exactly what it said, but they were talking about this big, black, male figure that was bigger than life, that was mammoth-like. And I just started thinking about these words that were describing this human being, and I was like, 'This is just insane to me.' And I realized at that point I needed to take a different responsibility, I need to recognize that this is the platform that I need to be delivering, to work on.

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“My first *Soundsuit* was a twig-suit. Which I didn’t even know it was a *Soundsuit*. I was just sort of making a piece in response to that situation. So I gathered all these twigs in the park and made this suit. I wasn’t even thinking that I could get into it. That wasn’t even on my brain. And then I made it and then I put it on. And I was just like, ‘Oh. My. God.’ And at that point I knew that I had, you know you just know when you’ve found it. And I just knew. And I thought, ‘Oh, God, am I ready to take on all of this right now.’ Because I just knew that it was a sculpture, it was again this suit of armor, it was this sort very unfamiliar sort of territory that I wasn’t really quite sure what it meant. Still don’t know really. Then there was performance. So it’s all of these sorts of things. In order to be heard, to have a voice, you need to be an activist.”

There are some wonderful high-resolution images of the Cave’s *Soundsuits* on the Internet, and you can see an awesome clip on YouTube of him talking about his work.

~Alexandra Ketchpaw

American Quilt Classics 1800-1980: The Bresler Collection



UNKNOWN
Bull's Eye Quilt circa 1860
 hand-pieced, appliquéd,
 quilted, and machine-
 pieced cotton
 Gift of Fleur and Charles
 Bresler. 2001.38.13

Following the success of the 2004 exhibition, *American Quilt Classics 1800-1980: The Bresler Collection*, will again be on display at the Mint Museum of Craft + Design starting July 29. The exhibition will display about 34 of the collection of collection of American quilts given to the museum by Fleur and Charles Bresler between 2000 and 2001. Fleur Bresler began collecting quilts as a hobby in 1971 after being introduced to the art through

her work as a docent at the Smithsonian. Her hobby soon developed into a passion as she fell in love with the printed fabrics, appliquéd designs and the historic tradition evident in American quilts.

This collection encompasses a variety of patterns and processes that have grown and evolved from the late 18th century through the 20th century and today. Arranged chronologically, the exhibition explores five

unique periods: The Origins of the American Quilt; A Unique American Style Emerges; Post Civil War Quilts; Depression Era Quilt Revival; and Quilting in the 20th Century. Within these periods, individual styles and quilting processes are also examined, including whole cloth and white work quilts, mosaic, appliquéd, *broderie perse*, album and charm quilts, log cabin and crazy quilts, and even a few Amish style pieces. Each quilt in this collection not only displays beautiful artistry, but also speaks to the people and time period in which they were constructed, creating an exhibition that is both historically significant and beautifully crafted. This exhibit is an excellent portrayal of the inspiration that led Fleur Bresler to begin her collection of American quilts.

For in-depth information about this exhibition, please visit the Mint Wiki at <http://mintwiki.pbwiki.com/>

~Rebecca Stockin

Artists' Tidbits: MMA

Julie Heffernan

Self Portrait as Wunderkabinett

- Julie Heffernan was born in 1956 in Peoria, Illinois and is an American painter.
- David Cohen, art critic for The New York Sun, aptly describes Heffernan’s art: —
- “These paintings are a hybrid of genres and styles, mixing allegory, portraiture, history painting, and still life, while in title they are all presented as self portraits.”

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JULIE HEFFERNAN. American, 1956-
Self-Portrait as Wunderkabinett 2003
 oil on canvas

Museum Purchase: Exchange Funds from the Gifts of Mrs. John White Alexander, Mr. and Mrs. J. Herbert Bridges, Mrs. Addison Reese, The Mint Museum Auxiliary, Dr. and Mrs. George T. Mims, and Harry and Mary Dalton. 2004.39

- The Mint acquired Heffernan's *Self-Portrait as Wunderkabinett* in 2003. Her work has been displayed at many respected museums and galleries in the United States.
- Heffernan was raised in Northern California and lives in Brooklyn, New York.
- She received a B.F.A. at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and an M.F.A. in painting at the Yale School of Art. Heffernan is an Associate Professor of Fine Arts at Montclair State University in Upper Montclair, New Jersey.

- She is married to Jonathan Kalb, chair of the Theater Department at Hunter College and theater critic for The New York Times. Heffernan has two sons, Oliver and Sam.

~Alex Ketchpaw

Fan Mail

- The docent did a great job! The teachers were very impressed with how well she involved the children. The children were mesmerized by her and her teaching style.
- The museum is absolutely awesome! I cannot wait to return so I can see all of it and take my time. This trip will be an annual trip for my students – I consider it a gift to them!
- Many of our students have not been exposed to artworks except through books, so visiting the museum and seeing different art forms was a wonderful experience for them.

Art Quote

“What I like is where you can see the physical stress working on the material, just as the artist is also working on the material. The wood wants to go back and be part of the soil that is going to make new trees, but the artist is taking that same material and making a human image out of it. So it tells a story of man in the world, which I think is profound, and you can get it for free I think if you pay attention to the material.”

~Bob Trotman

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Training Schedule

Veteran Docents of The Mint Museum

Sunday, June 14 – MMA

3:00PM

Vantage Point VIII Bob Trotman: Business as Usual with Bob Trotman

Saturday, July 11 – Docent Summer Get-Together

at Verna Witt's home

4:00PM

Potluck Dinner (BYOB)

RSVP to Verna:

9903 Heritage Oak Lane, Waxhaw, NC 28173

704-843-7344

verna@carolina.rr.com

Monday, July 27 – MMCD

9:30AM Coffee; 10:00AM Training

American Quilt Classics, 1800-1980: The Bresler

Collection with Allison Taylor, Adult Programs

Coordinator and Gail Light, Docent President

Monday, August 24 - MMA

9:30AM Coffee; 10:00AM Training

Passionate Journey: The Grice Collection of Native

American Art with Dr. Dorie Reents-Budet, Consulting

Curator of Ancient American Art

Tuesday, August 25 – MMA

7:00PM

Public Lecture-*Passionate Journey: The Grice*

Collection of Native American Art with Dr. Dorie

Reents-Budet, Consulting Curator of Ancient

American Art

Monday, August 31 – MMCD

9:30AM Coffee; 10:00AM Training

Permanent Collections Review with Cheryl Palmer,

Director of Education and Allison Taylor,

Adult Programs Coordinator

Please Note

Every docent will be mailed a hard copy of not only the veteran docent training schedule for 2009/2010, but also the new docent training schedule. Training schedules are also always posted in the docent lounge at MMA and the docent closet at MMCD in addition to being available on the docents' mint wiki page.

Uptown Parking Options

2 Hours Free

Dunhill Hotel parking garage (201 N. Tryon St. behind hotel) – ticket must be validated at MMCD front desk – anything over 2 hours is \$4.00

90 Minute Free Parking

- **7th Street Parking Deck** – Parking lot is located beside ImaginOn. Reid's Fine Foods and Brixx Pizza are on the ground level. Enter from 6th or 7th Streets. 6th Street is one way and entrance is immediately after the light rail tracks.
- **International Trade Center Deck** – Located behind the Holiday Inn. Enter from 6th Street (opposite 7th Street Parking Deck) or 5th Street. 5th Street entrance is on the left before the light rail tracks and the Bobcats Arena is almost directly in front of you.
- **ImaginOn Parking** – Enter from 6th Street before the light rail tracks and before the 7th Street Parking Deck.
- **TransAmerica Building Parking Deck** – Enter from 7th or 8th Streets. 7th Street entrance is located behind Rock Bottom Brewery. 8th Street entrance is almost directly across from the First United Methodist Church.
- **Surface lots or metered spaces** – surface lots cost between \$4.50 - \$6.00 for all-day parking.
- **Light rail** – for more details you can visit the Lynx website at www.charmeck.org/Departments/CATS/Lynx/home.htm.

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- **Park at MMA and take the bus (#15) to uptown. Route ends at the main garage uptown so you would need to walk the 4-5 blocks to MMCD – Cost \$1.50 one way – for more details you can visit the CATS website at www.charmeck.org/Departments/CATS/Home.htm.**

There is now petty cash available to MMCD docents to help defray parking expenses for tours and trainings. The cash box is located in the locked credenza inside the MMCD coat closet (where most docents keep their purses). You will need to ask front desk personnel for the key. **Please remember to keep this credenza locked.** There is a \$2.00 maximum per docent per day for parking expenses. **Docents must sign for the cash they take.** It is very important that you complete the cash sign-out form so we can keep accurate financial records. Please call or email Allison with any questions – 704-337-2032 or allison.taylor@mintmuseum.org.

Tour Tips

I've been asked to write a few notes on leading tours. After wondering, "Why me?" when there are so many of you who are much better than me at exactly that task, here's my say in five points....

- Be sure to introduce yourself and welcome the group; it sets the right tone.
- Ask questions about the works you study that don't have right and wrong answers; many people undervalue their own knowledge and experiences.
- Be flexible; the works you'd like to discuss may not be physically available to the tour at that time, or the group may have different interests and be drawn to another piece.
- Try to have a goal as you move from one object to another; if you can give your visitors something to think about as you move they can better anticipate what is next.
- Don't talk too much; silence is underappreciated and sometimes the best way to appreciate a work of art.

It seems to me that one of our main goals should be to make visitors feel comfortable in a museum. For us it may be a second home, but visitors are often uncomfortable about what is appropriate, whether one can be skeptical, irreverent, questioning, and even be surprised that they know as much as they do. If they have a good visit they are more likely to come back and to enjoy their future visits.

Maybe someone else would like to contribute her/his comments on tour tips for our newsletter next time?

~*Judith Toman*

Closing Letter

It has been a pleasure to serve as docent president this year. I have most enjoyed the opportunity to meet many more of you—the docent corps of The Mint Museum. While it has been a difficult year in some ways for arts institutions, the number of tours at Randolph Road was higher this year than last due in large part to two wonderful temporary shows: *Andy Warhol and Masterworks from the New Orleans Museum of Art*. The total number of tours given to groups at both Museum locations was 684, with 21,738 participants. While not all of these tours were docent-led, enough of them were that docents left their "touch" on the groups who toured our museums. Please see the evaluations that Allison has in her office if you are interested. Each tour group is asked to complete an evaluation and sometimes it is informative for us to review comments that visitors make about their experiences.

As we continue to plan for the new and changing facilities that will become available for the Mint in the next two years, please stay in tune with training



sessions. There is much new to learn about new works to be exhibited, works that are being commissioned for new spaces, and just getting oriented with how to do a tour in our new gallery spaces.

The upcoming year promises to be a busy one and one of change for the institution we love. Thanks to all of you who continue to volunteer your time and talents to enrich the experiences that visitors to the Mint Museum of Art experience in their time here. I look forward to seeing you at training in the fall. Have a wonderful summer and thanks again for allowing me the privilege to serve as president.

~*Judith Toman*

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