Press Invitation

*Ifugao Sculpture: Expressions in Philippine Cordillera Art*

Showcasing the powerful simplicity of the rice terraces

November 16, 2017

The University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong, is delighted to present *Ifugao Sculpture: Expressions in Philippine Cordillera Art* from December 1, 2017 to February 4, 2018, an exhibition of tribal art and culture. Rarely shown in such a large group display, both figurative sculptures and ritual boxes exemplify the talent of artists from the Ifugao, Bontoc and Kankanaey tribes in the northern Luzon region of the Philippines. The exhibition is organised in cooperation with Mr Martin Kurer and the Hong Kong-based Asian Art:Future (AA:F), a collection specialising in contemporary and antique Asian art.

The works displayed in the show range from sculptural objects, including ‘bulul’ statues, deities associated with the production of bountiful harvests; ‘hipag’ (or ‘hapag’) figures, war deities used as vehicles through which divine help can be summoned; sculptural boxes used in ceremonies, the ‘punamhan’; and various boxes for the storage of food—sometimes called ‘tangongo’ or ‘tanoh’—along with other functional items such as ‘kinahu’, food bowls, and toys. Fascinated with the modern abstract style of these carved 19th- and 20th-century sculptures, our exhibition takes an artistic rather than an anthropological approach, highlighting the aesthetics of the displayed artworks rather than signifying them as ethnic markers or religious tools. Both the bulul figures and boxes are deeply connected to cultural rituals while they present abstract expressions of a group of talented rural artists.

Together, these selected pieces showcase the aesthetic and artistic side of a wide range of Cordillera sculptural art from the 18th through the 20th centuries. The pieces are arranged in line with various centres of artistic gravity—‘archaic’, ‘minimalist’, ‘transition’—although the lines are sometimes blurred, and most of the ‘archaic’ material also shows ‘minimalist’ elements.

One of the essays in the exhibition catalogue draws comparisons with other tribal arts and describes their influence over modern Western artists, such as the Russian Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), the Romanian Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957) and the French artist George Braque (1882–1963). This claim is based on visual comparisons and it is each object’s physical structure, design value and international character that is highlighted in the current exhibition.

UMAG is grateful to AA:F for this fortuitous collaboration and also thanks the Philippine Consulate General for its support of this rare public exhibition.
Media preview
Date: November 30, 2017 (Thursday)
Media registration: Starts at 17:00
Time: 17:15 – 17:45
Meeting Point: 1/F, Fung Ping Shan Building, UMAG, HKU, 90 Bonham Road, Pokfulam
Language: English
Speaker: Martin Kurer, Chairman, Asian Art:Future
Media RSVP: Chelsea Choi, Tel: 2241 5509, Email: cchelsea@hku.hk

Opening ceremony
Date: November 30, 2017 (Thursday)
Time: 18:00 – 19:30
Venue: 1/F, Fung Ping Shan Building, UMAG, HKU, 90 Bonham Road, Pokfulam
Officiating Guests:
Martin Kurer, Chairman, Asian Art:Future
Roderico C Atienza, Acting Consul General, Consulate General of the Philippines in Hong Kong
Sec Alan Peter Cayetano, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Republic of the Philippines
Host: Florian Knothe, Director of UMAG, HKU

Details of the Exhibition
Period: December 1, 2017 (Friday) to February 4, 2018 (Sunday)
Opening Hours:
09:30 – 18:00 (Monday to Saturday)
13:00 – 18:00 (Sunday)
Closed on University and Public Holidays
Venue: 1/F Fung Ping Shan Building, UMAG, HKU, 90 Bonham Road, Pokfulam
Tel/Email: (852) 2241 5500 (General Enquiry) / museum@hku.hk
Admission: Free
Website: http://www.umag.hku.hk/en/

Connect with UMAG on social media:
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/umag.hku
Twitter: https://twitter.com/UMAG_HKU
Instagram: #IfugaoSculpture, #PhilippineCordilleraArt, #UMAG
Weibo: @香港大學美術博物館 UMAG

About University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong (UMAG)
UMAG was founded in 1953 as the Fung Ping Shan Museum. It was originally established as the Fung Ping Shan Library in 1932 in honour of its benefactor. For more information on UMAG, please click here.

Media enquiries
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