

Art of the Native Americans: The Thaw Collection October 24, 2010, to January 9, 2011

Exhibition explores 2,000 years of Native North American art from the Eastern Woodlands to the Northwest Coast



Central Yu'pik, Arctic region, Dance Fans (Finger Masks) (detail), c. 1875-1900. Fans restored by Chuna McIntyre in 1998. Thaw Collection, Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y., T0229 a,b. Photograph by John Bigelow Taylor

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This fall, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) will showcase 110 works from the acclaimed Eugene and Clare Thaw Collection of American Indian art. The new exhibition, "Art of the Native Americans: The Thaw Collection," celebrates the cultural legacy and artistic achievements of North America's first people over the past 2,000 years. The exhibition, organized by the Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y., opens October 24, 2010, and runs through January 9, 2011.

At the MIA, the exhibition will be accompanied by a special installation of videos featuring members of the local Native American community. Organized by associate curator of Native American art, Joe D. Horse Capture, the videos add a contemporary Native voice to the historical exhibition. They spotlight Carolyn Anderson, visual

artist and curator; Terri Yellowhammer, the Indian child welfare consultant for the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services; Rhiana Yazzie, playwright and author; Emily Johnson, dancer and choreographer; Perry Flanagan, director of the Native American Leadership Program, Wellstone Action; and Justin Kii Huenemann, president and CEO of the Native American Community Development Institute.

“This exhibition of the Thaw collection is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience such an extraordinary range of Native American art,” said Horse Capture. “We are delighted to bring this remarkable collection to Minneapolis, and to provide voices from members of the local Native American community.”

Structured by geographic regions, the exhibition offers artworks from each of the major Native American cultural regions: Arctic/Subarctic, California and the Great Basin, Northwest Coast, Plains/Prairie/Plateau, Southwest, and Woodlands. While the objects are diverse in type, style, and materials, they express a consistent appreciation of the power of the natural world both in human affairs and in the universal appeal of beautifully realized works of art.



Nimi'ipuu (Nez Perce), Plateau region, Horse Mask (detail), c. 1875-1900, Thaw Collection Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y., T0097. Photograph by John Bigelow Taylor



Tsimshian, Northwest Coast region, Frontlet, c. 1840-70, Thaw Collection, Fenimore Art Museum Cooperstown, N.Y., T0177. Photograph by John Bigelow Taylor

Exhibition highlights include:

- *War Helmet*, Tlingit people, Northwest Coast region—
A helmet featuring a figure of a spiritual being that protected and empowered the wearer for battle;
- *Shaman's Mask*, Yup'ik people, Arctic region—
A mask used for dances during harsh winter months to influence animals and ensure plentiful game;
- *Ceremonial Horse Mask*, Nimi'ipuu (Nez Perce) people, Plateau region—
A mask ornamented with multicolored feathers and horse hair;
- *Basket*, Karuk people, California region—
A masterfully woven basket created by legendary basket maker Elizabeth Conrad Hickox;
- *Caribou Skin Coat*, Innu (Naskapi) people, Arctic/Subarctic region—
A late 18th-century coat skillfully detailed with patterns reflecting a 17th-century European design;
- *Jar*, Hopi people, Southwest region—
made by renowned potter, Nampeyo, which features an elegantly abstracted eagle-tail design.

Eugene V. Thaw, one of the art world's most distinguished connoisseurs and collectors, started collecting Native American art in 1987 when he and his wife, Clare, moved to Santa Fe, N. M. They initially selected objects incorporating the image of the American flag, but soon focused on acquiring a comprehensive collection from across the continent. Thaw imposed the same standards he had applied to his previous collections: high aesthetic value and diverse representation. Today, this collection numbers more than 850 masterpieces of Native American art from across North America and spans more than 2,000 years. This collection celebrates and honors the artistic achievements of Native American people, and places their works among the world's greatest art.

A full-color catalogue highlighting objects in the Thaw Collection accompanies the exhibition and is available in the Museum Shop for \$29.95.

"Art of the Native Americans: The Thaw Collection" is organized by the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y. The exhibition is made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts as part of *American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius*.

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The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA), home to one of the finest encyclopedic art collections in the country, houses more than 80,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history. Highlights of the permanent collection include European masterworks by Rembrandt, Poussin, and van Gogh; modern and contemporary painting and sculpture by Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian, Stella, and Close; as well as internationally significant collections of prints and drawings, decorative arts, Modernist design, photographs, textiles, and Asian, African, and Native American art. General admission is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee. Museum hours: Sunday, 11 A.M.–5 P.M.; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 10 A.M.–5 P.M.; Thursday, 10 A.M.–9 P.M.; Monday closed. For more information, call (612) 870-3000 or visit www.artsmia.org.