

**LACMA INTRODUCES RECENTLY ACQUIRED ART OF THE PACIFIC OBJECTS IN AN INSTALLATION CONCEIVED BY ARTIST FRANZ WEST**

Installation of LACMA Art of the Pacific galleries, November, 2009

Los Angeles, November 2, 2009)—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents its recent acquisition of one of the most significant private collections of Pacific Island art assembled in the twentieth century in an installation designed by artist Franz West. Representative of the wide range of arts from the Pacific regions and with historic provenance, the collection's greatest strengths lie in artworks from Polynesia and Melanesia. The July 2008 acquisition substantially broadened LACMA's permanent collection and also underscored the museum's commitment to collecting and exhibiting works of art from underrepresented areas. Further, the installation by West and collaborator Andreas Reiter Raabe continues the museum's recent tradition of commissioning contemporary artists to create a new lens through which to see historic works. *Art of the Pacific*, curated by Deputy Director Nancy Thomas, is on view from November 7, 2009 through June 2010.

In addition to objects collected in Hawaii by Captain Cook, highlights include a *moai kavakava* (male ancestor figure) and *rapa* (dance paddle), both from Rapanui (Easter Island) and carved around 1800. The latter was collected *in situ* by Lieutenant Roberts Sayers, HMS *Thetis*, in 1830. A striking New Ireland *uli* (hermaphrodite ancestor figure), one of two acquired by the Linden Museum, Stuttgart, in 1906, is also on view, as is an extremely rare mid-nineteenth-century wicker shield with abstract figures inlaid in nautilus shell from Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands.

An animated figural Flute Stopper from the Biwat peoples, is among the key works from Papua New Guinea in the exhibition.

The acquisition and presentation of these extraordinary works--with their broad range of geographic distribution, exceptionally high level of quality, and distinguished provenance are, part of LACMA's ongoing initiative to expand its holdings in several areas within its encyclopedic collection. In so doing, LACMA becomes one of the few other museums exhibiting substantial holdings of art of the Pacific in the country, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the de Young Museum in San Francisco; the Field Museum, Chicago; the Bishop Museum, Honolulu; and the Saint Louis Museum of Art.

The impact of Pacific Island art has been substantial, and has had a particularly profound effect on modern artists, including expressionist, dada, and surrealist artists, writers, and scholars from the early twentieth century. Individuals such as Tristan Tzara, Man Ray, Max Ernst, André Breton, and Paul Eluard focused on the powerful forces of the natural world depicted in the art of the Pacific Islands. This affinity between art of the Pacific and modern art was explored in the landmark exhibition of the Museum of Modern Art in 1984, *Primitivism in 20th Century Art*. LACMA's new collection bears evidence of this connection with a Torres Strait Islands *warup* (hand drum) from Papua New Guinea, known to have been in the collection of Romanian-born poet and founder of the dada movement, Tristan Tzara, after his move to Paris in 1919.

Purchase of the forty-six rare and historic masterworks from the Pacific Islands was made possible through the generosity of a group of LACMA trustees and represented by gifts from The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation with additional funding by Jane and Terry Semel, The David Bohnett Foundation, Camilla Chandler Frost, Gayle and Edward P. Roski, and The Ahmanson Foundation. The newly added works, identified for LACMA by Sotheby's, were purchased from the Masco Corporation Foundation. Masco Corporation Foundation provides funding for its charitable activities which include primarily low income housing and arts and cultural activities in Southeast Michigan. The entire collection was displayed at The Kimbell Museum of Art, the Honolulu Academy of Arts, The Detroit

Institute of Arts, and the North Carolina Museum of Art during the mid-90s in a touring exhibition, *Island Ancestors, Oceanic Art from the Masco Collection*. The Masco Corporation Foundation has also generously made a gift of several additional works of art from the collection to LACMA.

LACMA's collaboration with Franz West comes on the heels of a number of other successful artist projects at the museum such as Jorge Pardo's recent installation design of LACMA's Meso-American art galleries, Robert Irwin's ongoing palm garden, and John Baldessari's installation design for *Magritte and Contemporary Art: The Treachery of Images*. LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director Michael Govan noted, "For centuries, artists have been asked to use their unique vision to interpret public spaces. Franz West's contribution to the installation of LACMA's new Art of the Pacific collection brings the viewer to consider these works in a remarkably fresh way." In March, West's work was the subject of a monographic exhibition in the same LACMA galleries as the Pacific Island installation. For *Art of the Pacific*, he created a design for pedestals for the objects as well as benches within the galleries. West, a Viennese artist who is well known for the integration of seating within his exhibitions, covered benches with a shaggy textile to introduce an unexpected element. Collaborator Andreas Reiter Raabe painted the gallery walls with a maté tea wash, providing a subtle background for the works and an indirect reference to the early tea trade, which brought voyagers across the Pacific.

#### **About LACMA**

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography—and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a new contemporary museum on its campus, BCAM. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations with artists, and an ongoing transformation project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

**General Information:** LACMA is located at 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. For more information about LACMA and its programming, call 323 857-6000 or visit lacma.org.

**Museum Hours and Admission:** Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, noon-8 pm; Friday, noon-9 pm; Saturday and Sunday, 11 am-8 pm; closed Wednesday. Adults \$12; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+ \$8; children 17 and under are admitted free. Admission (except to specially ticketed exhibitions) is free the second Tuesday of every month and on Target Free Holiday Mondays. After 5 pm, every day the museum is open, LACMA's

"Pay What You Wish" program encourages visitors to support the museum with an admission fee of their choosing.

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Installation view of LACMA Art of the Pacific galleries, November, 2009, installation designed by Franz West, photo © 2009 Museum Associates/LACMA

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