

Art of Africa: Objects from the Collection of Warren Robbins
Posted on Monday, Apr. 18, 2011

Art of Africa: Objects from the Collection of Warren Robbins, an exhibition that highlights the private collection of the founder and former director of the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, will be on view at the Charles H. MacNider Art Museum in Mason City, IA from April 21 through June 18, 2011.

Art of Africa presents more than 60 objects including sculpture, textiles, beaded clothing and jewelry, which broadly represent the creativity and diversity of artistic expression of nearly 30 cultures of sub-Saharan Africa. Accompanied by music and photographs, the exhibition will illustrate the broader cultural context in which these art forms were created and used. The collection is on loan from the Center for Cross Cultural Communication in Washington, D.C. Warren Robbins, its founder and director, is also founding director emeritus of the National Museum of African Art, now a branch of the Smithsonian Institution.



After leaving the State Department in 1962, Robbins established an interdisciplinary educational institute, the Center for Cross Cultural Communications, out of his Capitol Hill home. A year later, Robbins purchased the Washington home of abolitionist Frederick Douglas and opened the Museum of African Art on Capitol Hill, the first museum in the US devoted exclusively to the rich, creative heritage of Africa. Its stated purpose was "foster a deeper understanding of African culture, its history, its values, its creative tradition" and its relevance to lives of contemporary Americans.

Originally collected by European explorers and ethnologists as academic specimens or curios, African sculptures had, by the end of the 19th century, begun to accumulate in European natural history museums and found their way into the hands of dealers in

antiques and the "exotic" arts. At the beginning of the 20th century, a handful of European artists in France and Germany were intrigued by the unique forms and styles of African art and began to draw creative inspiration from them. The aesthetic significance of African art became highly appreciated and respected in Europe and served as a catalyst for the artistic revolution that ushered in modern art around the world.

Dr. Ofori Ansa, the curator for the exhibition, is an associate professor of African art at Howard University, Washington, D.C. Born and raised in Ghana, West Africa, he has curated several contemporary and traditional African art exhibitions in Ghana and in the U.S. and has led study abroad tours to Ghana for the past 6 years.

Art of Africa is from the collection of The Robbins Center for Cross Cultural Communication and is organized for tour by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC. Current scheduled tour dates include: Charles H. MacNider Art Museum, Mason City, IA (April 21, 2011 through June 18, 2011); Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (September 5, 2011 through November 28, 2011); Historic City Hall and Cultural Center, Lake Charles, LA (January 13, 2012 through March 10, 2012).

International Arts & Artists in Washington, DC, is a non-profit arts service organization dedicated to increasing cross-cultural understanding and exposure to the arts internationally, through exhibitions, programs and services to artists, arts institutions and the public. Visit www.artsandartists.org .

Art of Africa is sponsored locally in part by grants from the David and Phyllis Murphy Charitable Foundation & the Alliant Energy Foundation. For more information about this or any of the other exhibitions or events held at the Charles H. MacNider Art Museum please visit www.macniderart.org or call 641-421-3666.