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SPURLOCK

THE BIENNIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WILLIAM R. AND CLARICE V. SPURLOCK MUSEUM
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

M U S E U M



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Elizabeth Sutton, Director

Dear Friends,

Last academic year, the Spurlock spent a lot of time engaging with stakeholders in important conversations about our Museum in order to evaluate how we should evolve to meet the needs of our community. As we finish identifying our goals for the next 5 to 7 years, we are excited to continue to make important changes to the Spurlock.

One theme that consistently emerged from our stakeholder talks and interviews was the desire for the Spurlock to create exhibits and highlight subject matter related to cultural arts and movements of the modern era, through the present. When the opportunity arose last year to collaborate with the Theatre Department and Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, be part of Sasha Velour's visit to campus, and work with University and community members

to create a temporary exhibit on drag costume artistry, we jumped at the chance. This project is a special way for the Museum to join other campus departments and groups in commemorating the 50th anniversary of Stonewall riots and the rise of the LGBTQ rights movement.

In Her Closet—How to Make a Drag Queen opened at the Spurlock in September and will be on display through the end of the academic year in May 2020. The exhibition and companion programming slated for the year offer the Spurlock the opportunity to work with new audiences, community members and groups, University faculty and classes, and artists.

We hope you will embrace the opportunity to come view the exhibit and learn about drag art and performance from our participating drag artists and community curators. While television shows such as *RuPaul's Drag Race* have recently brought drag into the mainstream, many question the show's ability to depict drag artistry in an authentic way. Our intent in exhibiting these costumes is to draw attention to the great breadth and diversity in drag performance.

Additionally, this art form is very interesting in that drag artists have formed chosen families—the families we create, not the ones we are born into—and tight-knit communities around their art and performance. These families and communities are both supportive and competitive, as well as instrumental in the transmission of knowledge and continued development of the art form.

Thank you for your continued support of the Spurlock Museum of World Cultures throughout 2019. We look forward to seeing you back at the Museum soon.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Sutton, PhD
Director



SPURLOCK MUSEUM MAGAZINE

Editor: Beth Watkins

Produced for the Spurlock Museum by the **College of Liberal Arts & Sciences** Office of Communications and Marketing.

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Pictured above: **Annie Hart.**

On the front cover: **Sharon ShareAlike.**



Gioconda.



Opera Headdress. Bali, Inodnesia, 20th c. Gift of Krannert Center for the Performing Arts Costume Shop, UIUC. 1989.10.0021.

AWARDS & NEWS

The Museum was recently awarded \$20,000 by the Provost's office for the design of a new Teaching Gallery. The Teaching Gallery will provide space for university classes of up to 40 students to handle Museum artifacts in a controlled, safe environment. This space will enable us to share exponentially more of our collection with university students and use object-based learning to enhance curricula. We are grateful to the Provost's office for supporting this important project and look forward to designing a welcoming, dynamic space in which to explore the Spurlock's collections.

Based a grant written by Assistant Director of Education **Kim Sheahan**, the Museum has received \$19,200 in support from the Illinois Arts Council Agency for FY 2020.

The Education Section has been awarded support for its Big History series of middle school outreach programs by the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies, Global Studies, the European Union Center, and the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center. The funds go towards the hiring and travel of two graduate students who present the programs and artifacts and materials used during the programs.

We welcome new Security officer **Lynne Pinkstaff**; Assistant Registrar, Photography and Photographic Archives **Travis Stansel**; and Assistant Registrar for Acquisitions **Dery Martínez** to our team.

Student staff member **Kyndal Gragg** was awarded the 2019–2021 Mellon Curatorial Fellowship at The Art Institute of Chicago.

Jack Thomas, Director of Information Technology, received a College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Academic Professional Award.

John Holton has been selected to participate in the University's 2019–20 Academic Professional Leadership Program (APLP). The APLP is a twelve-month professional development opportunity that is designed to use the knowledge of university staff, executives, academic theory, and practical applications to foster an environment where leaders can emerge. He has also received a College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Academic Professional Award.

Carp. Artist: Keizan. Inlaid boxwood, 19th c. Japan. 2008.11.0002.



IN MEMORIAM: SARA DE MUNDO LO AND JIM SINCLAIR



Sara de Mundo Lo (left) with other visitors at the opening of the exhibit *Following the Paper Trail from China to the World* in 2005.

of the Parthenon frieze. They were also co-sponsors of the exhibit *Following the Paper Trail from China to the World*.



Jim Sinclair with some of his collections in his home.

Champaign-Urbana area that they once hosted a joint dinner for Spurlock and Krannert Art Museum staff to help us get to know each other better outside of work!

Sara de Mundo Lo was a dedicated member of the World Heritage Museum Guild and Spurlock Museum Guild, serving on auction committees, and the Spurlock Board. She and her husband Yuen Tze Lo donated to the Museum's teaching collections, and they also dedicated the scholar's desk exhibit in our Asian Cultures gallery and one of the panels of our plaster cast

Jim Sinclair was a long-time member of the Spurlock Board, including active work on this publication, for which he served on the committee and also wrote many articles. He and his partner Elmer Uselmann donated to the Spurlock office area, as well as many pieces in the teaching and artifact collections. Jim and Al were so dedicated to cultural institutions in the

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Chinese Calligraphy Book.
 Gift of Yuen T. Lo and Sara de Mundo Lo.



Buddha. Myanmar, ca. 1800. Gift of James B. Sinclair and Elmer A. Uselmann. 2001.08.0001.

BEHIND THE SCENES: Here Be Dragons

by Travis Stansel



Dragon. Japan, 19th c. 2004.13.0026.

Where be dragons? Here be two of the dragons who prowl the collections of the Spurlock Museum. As a new Photography Registrar, one of my first assignments was to photograph part of the Fred Freund Collection of Chinese and Japanese carvings. Two of the most impressive pieces in the collection are these Japanese *jizai* dragons. “Jizai” means freely moving decorative object. These are made of carved wood, but jizai are often made of metal.

These dragons are beautiful—intricate, articulated, and posable—but without holding them up, they lie flat with their legs jutting above the body. Great for storage, but they look a little tired. Working with Collections Manager **Christa Deacy-Quinn** and Collections Storage Coordinator **Gavin Robinson**, we made the dragons more lively with some puppeteering.

Fully articulated, the bodies of our dragons bend and turn; the mouths open and the legs are jointed at the body and bend at the knee. The smaller of the two measures just over a foot and is from the late Edo Period (1603–1868) or the early Meiji Period (1868–1912). The larger dates from the Meiji period in the 19th century and is considered exceptionally long, measuring 28 inches.



first, Gavin and Christa handled the dragons like puppeteers, but this meant the dragons were constantly moving, leading to blurred photos. So Gavin rigged up a clamp to hold each steady. This worked perfectly for the smaller of the two. The larger one is much heavier—in fact, heavier than the clamp and rigging assembly. We held the clamp down with sandbags, but it was not possible to get a shot without it showing. This called for construction paper and Photoshop: wrapping the clamp in the same paper as the grey backdrop made it easier to edit out.

The results bring the dragons to life. Because of their articulation and flexibility, the dragons were

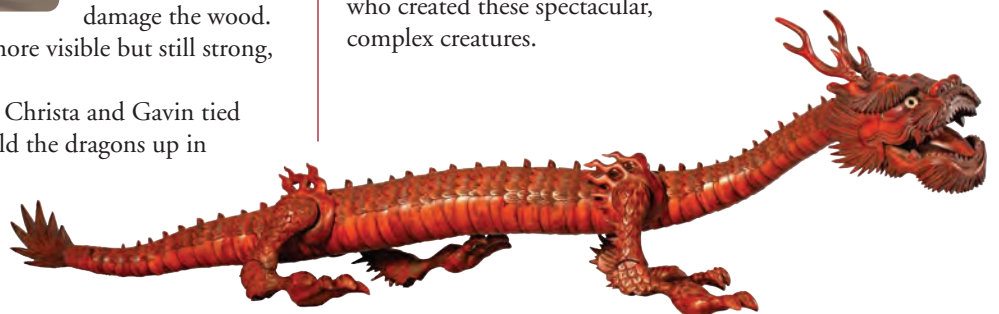


Christa decided to hold them up with thread like marionettes, but with something this fragile, the type of thread matters. A clear filament, like fishing line, is so strong that it could damage the wood.

Instead, silk thread was used. It's more visible but still strong, and it wouldn't harm the wood.

Then came posing each dragon. Christa and Gavin tied the thread at points that would hold the dragons up in life-like poses, such as at the necks and behind each set of legs. At

more difficult to photograph than anything else we shot in the Freund Collection. But those same features also enabled a variety of poses and a life-like effect that make the dragons seem in motion. We hope our photographs show a fitting respect to the skills of the original artists who created these spectacular, complex creatures.



Dragon. Japan, 19th c. 2010.13.0007.



NOW ON EXHIBIT: Molas People of San Blas



IN THE AMERICAS GALLERY, the Spurlock has added Central America to expand its cultural-geographic presentation that now includes the adjacent exhibits on areas of North and South America. By so doing, the aesthetic mosaic that constitutes the Americas comes together more fully and conjoins the original two galleries. One striking feature of the Central American component now on exhibit is that of the *molas*. These 2-sided reverse appliqué blouses are made by the Kuna indigenous people of the San Blas Islands in northeastern Panama, in their autonomous territory known as Kuna Yala (Kuna land). The Kuna, who speak Bayano, a dialect of the Chibchan language, are also depicted as Guna, San Blas Cuna, and Tula Kay. The Kuna population is now about 300,000, and the women who make molas live on about 35 islands.

The origin of molas is found in the precolumbian body painting and body adornment bark painting by women. With the European conquest and colonization came pressures to cover women's torsos. The Kuna did this by replicating their body designs in European imported cotton cloth and threads, and then elaborating creatively on the designs. The making of a mola is very labor



Molas: Top detail, **Geometric pattern**. 1993.18.0007; Top left, **Octopus-human figure**. 2008.22.0080; Center left, **Christian crucifixion scene**. 2013.05.1625; Bottom right, **Santa Claus**. 2008.22.0062.





of the Kuna Indigenous Islands, Panama

by Norman E. Whitten, Jr.



intensive, and an artist may work for weeks to a few months to produce a fine piece with from 2 to 6 or more panels.

Commercialization and creativity among the Kuna seem to go hand in hand. Many of the finest molas are made by women for their own use, and then when they tire of the design they put the exquisite piece up for sale directly to tourists who visit the islands regularly, or to commercial entities that market them throughout the world.

The disruptions and radical changes caused by conquest, colonization, and nationalization in the Americas have been and are extensive. While nothing as explicit as the depiction of revolt in the Indigenous Peruvian *retablo*, also featured in this issue of the Spurlock Magazine, the Kuna women, like their counterparts in other cultures of the Americas, do depict epoch changes. Such changes occurred in 1903 when Panama became independent from Colombia, and again in 1925 when the Kuna people rose as one to demand their own independent territory, which was granted. The former event is depicted in the mola (*shown above right*) entitled “Treaty of 1903.”

The Spurlock Museum holds about 80 molas, of which 6 are displayed in the current exhibit between the North and South American gallery areas. One notes immediately how diverse the depictions are across the room. For example, engagement in the spirit world is expressed in a shamanic curing ceremony (*shown on right*). Engagement with the social world is presented in political imagery (*shown below right*). This political mola spells out the geographical name Comarca Colón. A *comarca* in Panama is an indigenous region, of which there are now five, each with its distinctive ethnic arts traditions. The range of subjects goes on and on and includes, for those on display in the galleries, various animals, an octopus-human figure, geometric patterns, a Christian crucifixion scene, and even Santa Claus.



Molas: Center, **Animals**. 2008.22.0101; Above right, **Treaty of 1903**. 2008.22.0107; Center right, **Shamanic curing ceremony**. 2008.22.0067; Bottom right, **Comarca Colón**. 2008.22.0066.

In Her Closet—How to

Overview by Community Curator
John Musser, PhD

Pink feathers, sequins, sky-high heels, corsets, impossible proportions, duct tape, a pound of stage makeup, and a healthy portion of sass. These things might come to mind when you hear “drag queen.” The popularity of drag has exploded in recent years, and so have the questions and curiosities related to drag artistry. This exhibit takes a step into the closet of the drag queen and highlights the aesthetic practices of costuming and styling that make her fabulous. How do drag queens get “that look”? Is it just her attitude and fierceness, or is there strategy and intentional craft involved? *In Her Closet* explores these questions and curates a selection of costumes and materials loaned by several drag performers connected to the Champaign-Urbana area.

Drag is that wonderfully queer, effervescent performance artform that brings to life the fantasy of transformation and the joy of play. Drag, as we understand it today, is almost always connected to the LGBTQ community, and it has held an important role in queer culture, well before the advent of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. Feminist philosophers and scholars of performance might look to drag as a way to explain how gender itself is a kind of ritual—an aesthetic endeavor which you learn over time. But to most queers, drag queens offer a certain promise: the promise that you could become fabulous with the right wig and the right attitude. Drag offers queer folk the chance to play with the lines of gender and to use their bodies as a canvas to create a unique persona for the stage.

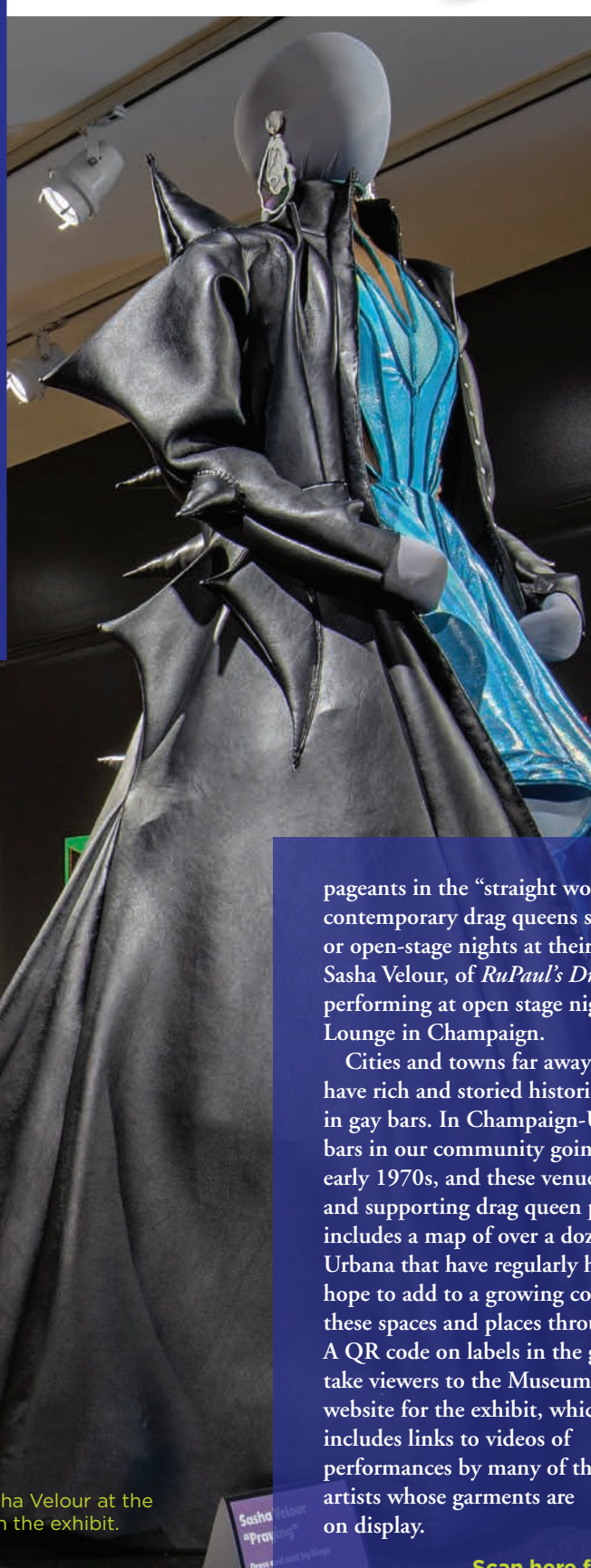
Large metropolitan areas like New York City and San Francisco have perhaps the best reputations for staging drag shows in a variety of settings. But drag queens have been performing in smaller cities and even smaller towns across the United States since the early 20th century. Cities may boast theater and performance spaces where drag queens can produce shows with high production value, but most drag queens perform in more intimate and DIY settings—like the local gay bar. Gay bars became the centers for queer life in the mid- to late 20th century, where LGBT patrons would go to socialize, have drinks, and meet potential partners for sex or dating. They became spaces where drag queens entertained queer audiences while building reputations as local or regional performers. Local drag queen competitions are also frequently staged in gay bars, and they mirror the structure and prestige of beauty

Sharon ShareAlike



The introduction of the exhibit focuses on garments and photographs tied to local history, featuring looks from Ceduxion Carrington (left) and Mona Monclair (right), as well as a collage of images from 40 years of local drag shows and venues.

Make a Drag Queen



Garments from Sasha Velour at the front of the stage in the exhibit.

pageants in the “straight world.” Even the most famous contemporary drag queens started performing in pageants or open-stage nights at their local gay bar. For instance, Sasha Velour, of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* fame, started performing at open stage nights at the Chester Street Lounge in Champaign.

Cities and towns far away from the east and west coasts have rich and storied histories of drag queens performing in gay bars. In Champaign-Urbana, there have been gay bars in our community going back over 40 years to the early 1970s, and these venues were no exception in hosting and supporting drag queen performances. The exhibit includes a map of over a dozen locations in Champaign-Urbana that have regularly hosted drag shows, and we hope to add to a growing collage of images of some of these spaces and places throughout the run of the exhibit. A QR code on labels in the gallery and printed here will take viewers to the Museum’s website for the exhibit, which includes links to videos of performances by many of the artists whose garments are on display.

Scan here for more information about this exhibit.



COSTUME AND PER COLLEC



1) Morenada costume: top, glove, and boot. This costume was worn once by a member of a dance fraternity in the Oruro Carnival in 2007. The costume was created by a local designer and his assistants, based on the troupe's standard costume format and dance style. Oruro, Bolivia, 2007. Gift of Licet and Elena Rosales. 2015.06.0001. **2) Theater Costume: Man's Robe.** China, late 19th c. Gift of Mrs. F. L. Stevens. 1940.07.0015. **3) Dance of the Cowboy.** Maya culture, Santo Domingo Xenacoj, Guatemala, ca. 1990. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2016.05.0006. **4) Headdress: Danzantes del Sol.** Pujili, Ecuador, late 20th c. Gift of Joseph and Mary Molinaro. 2016.11.0001. **5) Costume: Dance of the Deer.** Dance dramas in Maya public rituals are a practice that dates back thousands of years. Stories of politics, cosmology, animals, early humans, and rulers are depicted in movement, costume, music, and oration. Maya culture, Santo Domingo Xenacoj, Guatemala, ca. 1990. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2016.05.0001. **6) Opera Headdress.** Hundreds of kinds of headdresses are used in Chinese opera. The art form was introduced into southeast Asia in the 17th and 18th centuries. Bali, Indonesia, 20th c. Gift of Krannert Center for the Performing Arts Costume Shop, UIUC. 1989.10.0017.

PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS



Morenada costume: glove. 2015.06.0008.



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COSTUME AND PERFORMANCE COLLECTIONS





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7) Theater Costume: Empress's Robe. In combination, the phoenix and four-clawed dragon indicate an empress. China, late 19th c. Gift of Vera L. Ricker. 1957.02.0004. **8) Costume: Dance of the Bull.** Maya culture, Santo Domingo Xenacoj, Guatemala, ca. 1990. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2016.05.0004. **9) Costume: Dance of the Witch.** Maya culture, Santo Domingo Xenacoj, Guatemala, ca. 1990. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2016.05.0005. **10) Costume: Cristiano.** Maya culture, Santo Domingo Xenacoj, Guatemala, ca. 1990. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2018.04.0001. **11) Dance Headdress.** Bali, Indonesia, 20th c. Gift of Krannert Center for the Performing Arts Costume Shop, UIUC. 1989.10.0020. **12) Costume: Dance of the Conquistador.** Maya culture, Santo Domingo Xenacoj, Guatemala, ca. 1990. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2016.05.0002. **13) Noh Mask.** Hannya, woman turned into a demon. Japan. Teaching Collection. T03710A. **14) Kaavad (Storyteller Box).** These elaborately painted boxes depict stories. Storytellers unfold, slide, and swivel the panels to illustrate their tales as they perform. Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, mid- or late 20th c. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2008.22.0007. **15) Costume: Dance of the Deer.** Dance dramas in Maya public rituals are a practice that dates back thousands of years. Stories of politics, cosmology, animals, early humans, and rulers are depicted in movement, costume, music, and oration. Maya culture, Santo Domingo Xenacoj, Guatemala, ca. 1990. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2016.05.0001.

Sculpted Stories

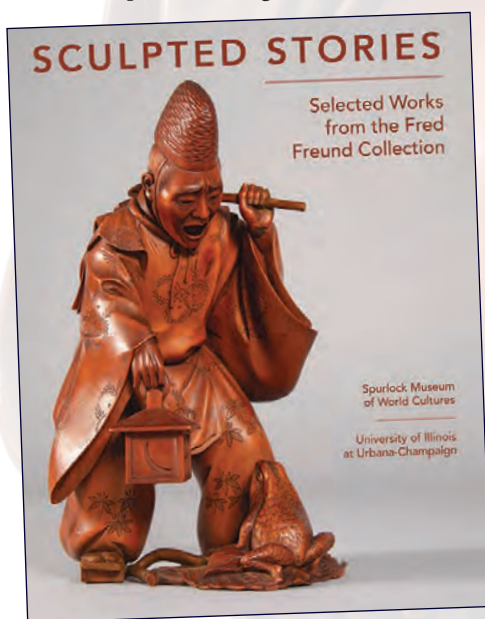
by Kim Sheahan



Since 1999, Fred Freund has donated over 200 Chinese and Japanese objects to the Museum. The majority of these are intricate carvings of humans, animals, and deities, as well as writing-related items found on a traditional Chinese scholar's desk.

In celebration of Mr. Freund's generosity, the Museum staff, with the help of University of Illinois scholars, have created a publication called *Sculpted Stories: Selected Works from the Fred Freund Collection*. The title was inspired by the research of an undergraduate student working on a small exhibit of Freund objects *Warriors, Guardians, and Demons*, displayed during the Museum's Centennial year in 2011, who noticed that many of the pieces represented characters in Japanese and Chinese folklore. (Information on the exhibit can be found in the "Past Exhibits" section of the Exhibits tab on our website.) In planning the publication, the writing and research team decided to organize material into chapters based on the figures represented in the carvings, such as gods, scholars, and the animals of the zodiac. Chapters were also added on Japanese and Chinese woodcarving and storytelling, as well as an article on Mr. Freund and his collection. The book is meant not as a children's storybook but as a work for the adult reader interested in cultural folktales.

Many people from across the Museum and campus were involved in the creation of *Sculpted Stories*. Like an exhibit, the project required input and expertise from a variety of staff, including our talented undergraduate students, who helped with design, research, and artifact cleaning and photography. The book was completed through the support of the Kimberly S. Freund Memorial Fund.



Story: Grinding an Iron Pestle

A famous Chinese idiom comes from a legend told of Li Bai: "Grinding an iron pestle into a needle."

Li Bai was not a studious young man. He liked to play and often paid no attention to his teachers. One day he was outside, crossing a brook when he should have been in class, when he saw an old woman sitting on the ground rubbing a thick iron pestle, grinding and grinding without stopping.

When he asked her why she was doing this, the old woman explained that she didn't have any usable needles, so she was going to grind the pestle down until it could be used as one. Li Bai laughed at the woman, calling her task one for a fool, but she was determined to accomplish it. Li Bai took the pestle and rubbed it, but found himself exhausted in a minute's time. He handed the pestle back to the old woman. "I quit," he told her.

Sighing, the old woman told him, "The iron pestle can be ground into a needle, as long as you keep working hard."

The young man realized the wisdom and power of her words, and he remembered them in his heart. From that moment he took his studies seriously and became a great poet.



Hotei. God of Happiness and Laughter, One of the 7 Gods of Good Fortune
Artist: Koshin. Boxwood, Japan, 1868–1912. 2006.12.0011.



Guanyin. Boxwood, China, 17th–18th c.
1999.13.0003.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

with Gabriel Llano

by Monica M. Scott

Mola (detail). 2008.22.0092.



Museums are not “one size fits all.” Diverse modalities of engagement are necessary to ensure visitors connect with something in the museum during their visits. Some visitors enjoy reading didactic text to learn more about an object. Others may find interactive stations best at piquing their interests.

Some visitors may simply prefer looking at the object. Still others may like talking with their friends or family about the objects on view.

Regardless of how visitors prefer to engage, museum staff think critically about how they share information to visitors and which type of visitors these different modalities target. In an effort to attract more University students, the Spurlock Museum’s Public Education and Volunteer Coordinator has been talking with students and brainstorming new in-gallery engagement tools. Fortunately, while thinking about how best to expand the interpretation of objects in the Museum’s permanent exhibits, a new volunteer was looking for a summer opportunity. A great gallery project was born. The Spurlock Museum can offer the chance to customize their volunteerism around a project that aligns perfectly with staff ideas that are under development. That’s how **Gabriel Llano** began volunteering.

Gabriel (known as Gabe) is a resident of Mahomet, Illinois and full-time student in anthropology at Columbia University in New York City. Inspired by a visit to the Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, and that museum’s electronic pen tool that visitors use to digitally “collect” items in exhibits and interact with collections on digital tabletops, Gabe thought the “integration of technology with the artifacts could help capture visitors’ interest, especially for those of younger generations.” The QR code project shares additional information about an object from each of the permanent exhibits. Museum visitors will use a QR code reader on their smart phones wherever the QR codes are visible in the Museum. Once they scan the codes, visitors’ browsers will take them to online space where they will see images and videos that help activate the objects.

Get to know Gabe as he responds to questions about his interests and long-term career goals in this Volunteer Spotlight.

Why did you begin volunteering with Spurlock Museum?

I’m really interested in seeing how anthropology and knowledge are presented to the general public. I grew up on the South Side of Chicago and regularly used to go to large museums as a kid, such as the Museum of Science and Industry near my house and the Field Museum, two labyrinthine museums. I would constantly beg my parents to go all the time because they both really inspired me. They had this eclectic collection of artifacts from world cultures and telling stories, getting kids like me really invested in hands-on activities and demonstrations.

Because of this, I’ve grown up really interested in examining the intersection between education and the general public, particularly in open spaces such as museums. I’m the president of a music club at my school and recently interned at an arts organization in New York where we regularly promoted the awareness of people, social justice, and art in the city. Volunteering at the Spurlock Museum allows me to have strong relationships with a professional staff of museum curators and workers, really take on some hands-on work in creating a project to increase visitor engagement, and explore the world of museum operations.

What are your career goals?

I am interested in the complex social relationships created through music and sound and the creation of an aural space. Some of my professors have traveled around the world listening to sounds and writing about the creation of soundscapes, even working with more illustrious names like Alvin Lucier. My current plan is to pursue graduate study and complete fieldwork in anthropological music studies and ethnomusicology, hopefully teaching at the academic level or in a museum setting. Ultimately, wherever I go, my hope is to explore and promote the connection

between people and music, to help others fulfill their artistic endeavors, and to raise awareness of the complexities of artistic expression.

What sparked your interest in using QR codes in the Museum’s galleries?

[Cooper-Hewitt] had a special program where they gave you an electronic “pen” which you could wave against certain artifacts and learn more

about the artists behind them and keep a record of the most interesting exhibits as you traipse about. I thoroughly enjoyed the idea, as I naturally began to pay attention to each of the artifacts and know the artists behind them.

As I was drafting ideas in boosting visitors’ engagement... I came up with QR codes as a method of engagement because they are well-known and would attract students interested in technology.

What do you expect to learn during your volunteerism with Spurlock Museum?

I’m mostly interested in seeing how anthropology is talked about in the public sphere and how it is put into action. In classes, we talk a lot about how the ethics of presenting anthropological ideas to the general public, respectfully talking about cultures different from ours, and analyzing the subtle but powerful vestiges of colonialism in our contemporary modes of thought. In a museum setting, we have a unique opportunity to address cultural misrepresentation in museums and to bring these conversations into the public sphere. I hope to learn how these conversations are presented to the public and how museums work to address these topics.



NEW ON DISPLAY:

Retablo

by Norman E. Whitten, Jr.



Originating in the Middle Ages as sacred Catholic Church art, *retablos* in the mid-20th century became a form of secular art depicting any number of images and events. This piece depicts a confrontation in the Plaza de Armas, Ayacucho, Peru, circa 1985. The event occurred during the height of social unrest that followed the rise of the revolutionary political party Shining Path and led to then-president Alan García fleeing the country.

Renowned artist **Nicario Jiménez Quispe** (originally from Ayacucho) made this retablo. Nicario primarily works with a mixture of boiled potato paste and gypsum powder. The piece was a gift to the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University from its former director Enrique Mayer. It has become iconic for the Center, where it was prominently displayed.

Retablo. 2018-00129.



MEET THE STAFF:

Dery Martínez

Interview by Beth Watkins



Dery Martínez started at Spurlock in October as the Assistant Registrar for Acquisitions, where he focuses on researching and processing objects coming into our collection.

What experience has been most influential in your museum career so far?

I interned at GALA Hispanic Theatre in Washington, DC, and they have a collection of photographs and other objects that no one had documented or even looked at before. Unfortunately, they were deteriorating—some of the photos were unsalvageable. I had to set up my own system on how to document and rehouse them. It was a lot of fun because I learned so much about how to deal with a collection, as well as a lot about the DC Latino culture in which the theater grew up. The culture has grown and changed too, and the theater has been important to that community.

What made you want to apply for the job at Spurlock?

Being at a world cultures museum! Even though I've trained as an art historian, my research has always been on ethnographic material. And I was really interested in working in a place with no full-time curators—I knew it would be such a different experience than the models I learned about in school.

Does being part of a big campus have particular effects on your job?

On the one hand, you get to work with a lot of diverse groups, which is a plus given that it's a world cultures museum! On the other, you



have to learn a big bureaucracy and how to work all the different systems to get things done on time. Learning how to manage all the moving parts will take a while.

Readers may not know much about the formal process of borrowing and acquiring objects. What are some of the trickiest steps?

Even though it seems to be focused on objects, this job involves a lot of working with people, learning their expectations, and meeting their needs. There's a lot of variation from situation to situation. A loan for an exhibit might be carefully planned to meet the needs of all people and institutions involved, but we all know things happen and disrupt your plans. It's complicated but interesting, and communicating is so important. Donations have a different approach: working within the museum's mission and collecting plan; checking on provenance; looking for the correct, legitimate documentation to meet national and international laws and best practices, etc. We must respect the rules that protect the cultures we hope to include in our collections and work.

What's your favorite museum and why?

The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. They have a fantastic, very diverse collection. I first visited it in high school and then kept going. I love how they explain the objects. I have a love for replicas and forgeries, and they use them in an interesting way, connecting them to other stories. The first time I went there, I overheard a group of college students looking at the replica of the Mona Lisa talking about how they thought that was in Paris! The museum connects the replicas to other stories and integrates them into their educational activities.

You've lived in DC and Fort Worth. How do you find Champaign-Urbana so far?

I expected the corn but not the good public transportation system! I'm also glad to discover there's so much to do here, both on campus and in the towns. Campus is very diverse—I'd visited a few other universities in the Midwest and they were not as much so—and that's been a great surprise. My interview at Spurlock was over the summer and campus was quiet, but even then I got a sense of the diverse communities here.

What do you like most about museums?

You keep learning as you work in them! A museum never stops surprising you, and from that experience, you get the opportunity to teach others.

(Above right) **Costume: Dance of the Witch.** Maya culture, Santo Domingo Xenacoj, Guatemala, ca. 1990. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2016.05.0005.

(Left) **Diablada Costume and Mask.** Cochabamba (costume) and Oruro (mask), Bolivia, 2008–9. 2008.04.0001 (costume) and 2009.02.0001 (mask).



MEET THE STAFF: Travis Stansel

Interview by Beth Watkins

Travis Stansel joined the Museum in January as the Assistant Registrar for Photography and Photographic Archives and is our first full-time employee focused on these important aspects of museum work.

Your career path has been different than that of many of the other Spurlock staff. Tell us about how you came to the Museum.

I worked at WILL as a producer before going back to graduate school for architecture. In graduate school, I rediscovered photography after not doing it for many years; what got me back into it was taking pictures of buildings and building sites and also using Photoshop to produce graphics for architectural presentations. After graduate school, I started freelancing as a photographer.

Barong Ket Dance Costume Mask.
Gift of Professor John Garvey.
2002.17.0001.



How is photographing artifacts similar (or not) to your work with buildings?

At the simplest level, buildings and artifacts are both 3-dimensional objects in space—sometimes it helped in taking a picture of a building to reduce it down that way in my mind as I'm taking a picture. When taking pictures of buildings (buildings being by definition not mobile and outside) there are factors like the weather, seasons, and sunlight to contend with. I can move an artifact around for a better angle, but with a building if the light is not right, it's either not the right time, or the building is in the wrong place for what I'd like to see. Or it's not the right season, and we have pretty distinct seasons here.

What has surprised you about working at the museum?

The scope and size of the collection is amazing.

People may not know that Spurlock has a photo room. What kind of equipment do you use in there?

It is pretty hidden—some full-time staff members don't even realize it's there. We have 3 cameras, 5 lights of

different kinds, 3 tripods, a few lenses for different uses, a table, and backdrop.

Describe a photo you took that felt like a triumph.

I have a collection of photos that I've taken around the Midwest of Mid-20th Century Modernist buildings—houses, office buildings, etc. Some are famous, some are not, but that collection, which is growing, I really like.



Oil Lamp for Shadow Puppet Theater. Bali or Java, Indonesia, mid- or late 20th c. Estate of Robert E. Brown. 2012.07.0048.

Any advice for people getting into digital photography?

There are so many places to look now for information on digital photography—specialized websites, LinkedIn Learning (formerly Lynda.com), YouTube.... Because of all the options on YouTube, you have to determine who you trust and who you find easy to follow. You can really do a web search for anything you want to know about photography and learn what you want. You can never really be done, but you can learn what you want to learn.

What's your favorite museum and why?

It depends! I really like the Met because it has amazing paintings by Johannes Vermeer and John Singer Sargent; you can go in there and aim to see just a handful of paintings and not be overwhelmed by the enormity of the collection. I've always loved the Art Institute of Chicago; I believe the first time I was there I was 2 or 3 years old. It's gotten even better since the addition of the Modern Wing, where my favorite Gerhard Richter paintings live. It's always been a more-than-world-class museum, and the new wing adds a great deal. I also love the de Young Museum in San Francisco. In addition to being a great museum, it's also a fantastic building, one of not-too-many designed by the Swiss firm Herzog and DeMeuron. One of its best features is a 9-story tower that looks over Golden Gate Park—you can see much of the city from there, at least the parts not blocked by hills. If you don't have time for the museum itself, the tower has a separate (and free) entrance.



Travis's work is featured throughout this magazine.

Costume: Cristiano. Maya culture, Santo Domingo Xenacoj, Guatemala, ca. 1990. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2018.04.0001.

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