

**PREMIER SPECIAL EXHIBITION OF THE GALLERY'S INDO-PACIFIC
ART COLLECTION**

East of the Wallace Line: Monumental Art from Indonesia and New Guinea
August 15, 2014–February 1, 2015



Threshold, Ngada, Indonesia, Flores, 19th century.
Wood. Yale University Art Gallery, Promised gift of
Thomas Jaffe, B.A. 1971. Photo: Johan Vipper

New Haven, Connecticut, August 15, 2014 – East of the Wallace Line: Monumental Art from Indonesia and New Guinea explores the cultural characteristics of eastern Indonesia and coastal western New Guinea. Taking as its jumping-off point the “Wallace Line,” an ecological demarcation first recognized by British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace that runs through Indonesia between Bali and Lombok and between Borneo and Sulawesi, the exhibition presents intricately decorated, large-scale sculptures and textiles, as well as more intimate personal and domestic objects. With

more than 120 works from the 17th to 19th century, the exhibition features highlights from the Gallery’s permanent collection and select loans, many either too large or too fragile to be regularly displayed.

Alfred Russel Wallace, who together with Charles Darwin developed the theory of evolution, first identified the division that bears his name on a trip to Bali and Lombok in 1859, during an eight-year stay in the East Indies. Wallace discovered significant faunal differences between Bali and the lands to the west of the Lombok Strait and Lombok and the islands to the east. He noted that the two islands “form the extreme points of the two great zoological divisions of the Eastern hemisphere.” The Wallace Line continues northward between Borneo and Sulawesi and then turns northeast, passing below the Philippines and north of the Sangihe and Talaud archipelagoes.

Though the Wallace Line does not follow a cultural divide between east and west in maritime Southeast Asia, there are certain iconographic and stylistic characteristics shared in the arts east of the Wallace Line, such as intricate, interlacing patterns and complex geometric designs. These characteristics are explored in the exhibition, which provides the opportunity to show some of the more monumental carvings and large ceremonial textiles in the Gallery’s Indo-Pacific collection.

Spectacular ritual and ancestral sculptures from the islands of Timor, Flores, Sulawesi, and the Moluccas form the focus of the display of objects from eastern Indonesia. From western coastal New Guinea, there are objects from the Raja Ampat Islands and Cenderawasih Bay, located in the Bird’s Head Peninsula. It was in



Woman’s Tunic (Halili), Palu Toraja, Indonesia, Sulawesi, ca. 1900. Cotton with mica, beads, and sequins. Yale University Art Gallery, Robert J. Holmgren and Anita E. Spertus Collection, Promised gift of Thomas Jaffe, B.A. 1971. Photo: Christopher Gardner



Ancestor Figure (Korwar), Indonesia, West Papua, Cenderawasih Bay, 19th century. Wood with glass beads. Lent by Thomas Jaffe, B.A. 1971. Photo: Johan Vipper

this region that artists developed the so-called *korwar* style, which is characterized by distinctive facial features, including deep-set eyes and an arrow-shaped nose. *Korwar* figures represent ancestor spirits that are highly venerated but also treated with awe and caution. While *korwar* are religious objects, similar facial features are also found on objects that have a daily function, such as boat prows, tool handles, and household bowls.

“Most of the artworks in the exhibition were made to benefit communal and personal well-being,” explains Ruth Barnes, the Thomas Jaffe Curator of Indo-Pacific Art at the Gallery and organizer of the exhibition. “Figural sculptures commemorate the village and lineage ancestors. Large structures, such as the Flores forked posts, were erected to ensure cosmic order and balance. These objects were originally placed in ritually significant locations, at the center of the village or in locations associated in legend or oral history with events that were important to the community.” However, not all of the objects on display were intended for use in a ritual or

ceremonial context; there also are functional objects – spoons, swords, and knife or adze handles – that are embellished with striking accomplishment. The carvings and textiles on view show the artists’ ability to manipulate materials to create objects of exceptional quality.

At the time of Wallace’s explorations of the Malay Archipelago, there was a growing awareness of the region’s environment and its cultures, and by the early 20th century, Western artists and collectors had begun to appreciate these art forms. Several of the objects in *East of the Wallace Line* come from these early collections.

“These are objects of imposing dignity, presence, and aesthetic complexity,” states Laurence Kanter, Chief Curator and the Lionel Goldfrank III Curator of European Art. “In this first exhibition drawn from our Indo-Pacific collections since the opening of our new galleries, it is at last possible to show the grandest and most monumental of them alongside the more intimate and personal – the exotic together with the commonplace – providing a truly inclusive vision of a fascinating and undeservedly little-known part of the world.”

An iPad app accompanies the exhibition and allows visitors to explore cultural themes that place the art into context. Designed by Eight Communications, the app has been made possible through the generous assistance of Thomas Jaffe.

Related Programs

Members’ Preview

Thursday, August 14, 3:00 pm

Ruth Barnes, the Thomas Jaffe Curator of Indo-Pacific Art

Registration required; please call 203.432.9658.

Exhibition Tour

Friday, September 19, 1:30 pm

Ruth Barnes, the Thomas Jaffe Curator of Indo-Pacific Art

Music and Conversation

Thursday, October 2, 5:30 pm

Maho Ishiguro, with Ruth Barnes, the Thomas Jaffe Curator of Indo-Pacific Art; Sarah Casson, MESC candidate; and Camille Hoffman, M.F.A. candidate

Gallery Talk

“Living with Ancestors: East of the Wallace Line”

Wednesday, October 15, 12:30 pm

Ruth Barnes, the Thomas Jaffe Curator of Indo-Pacific Art

Exhibition Support

Exhibition organized by Ruth Barnes, the Thomas Jaffe Curator of Indo-Pacific Art, Yale University Art Gallery. Made possible by an endowment created with a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Yale University Art Gallery

The Yale University Art Gallery, the oldest college art museum in the United States, was founded in 1832 when the patriot-artist John Trumbull gave more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then its collections have grown to more than 200,000 objects ranging in date from ancient times to the present.

In addition to its world-renowned collections of American paintings and decorative arts, the Gallery is noted for outstanding collections of Greek and Roman art, including artifacts from the ancient Roman city of Dura-Europos; collections of early Italian paintings; the Société Anonyme Collection of 20th-century European and American art; modern and contemporary art and design; Asian art; African art; art of the ancient Americas; and Indo-Pacific art.

In December 2012, the Gallery completed a comprehensive expansion and renovation project which united its three buildings – the landmark Louis Kahn building (1953), the Old Yale Art Gallery building (1928), and Street Hall (1866) – into a cohesive whole with a rooftop addition by Ennead Architects (2012). The Gallery is both a collecting and an educational institution, and all activities are aimed at providing an invaluable resource and experience for Yale faculty, staff, and students, as well as for the general public.

General Information

The Yale University Art Gallery is located at 1111 Chapel Street, New Haven, Connecticut. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10 am–5 pm; Thursday until 8 pm (September–June); and Saturday–Sunday, 11 am–5 pm. The Gallery is closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission is free and open to the public. For general information, please call 203.432.0600 or visit the website at www.artgallery.yale.edu.

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