

Bruce W. Carpenter



INDONESIAN
**TRIBAL
ART**

INTRODUCTION BY
Andrew Gurevich and Robert Walter
Joseph Campbell Foundation

INDONESIAN
**TRIBAL
ART**

The Rodger Dashow Collection

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
Marc Assayag

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CONCEPT AND PROJECT MANAGER
Bruce W. Carpenter

PHOTOGRAPHER
Marc Assayag

EDITOR
Lindsay Davis

DESIGNER
Annie Teo

DIGITAL WORK
Ni Luh Ketut Sukarniasih

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Sin Kam Cheong

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Editions Didier Millet Pte Ltd
35B Boat Quay
Singapore 049824
Phone: +65 6324 9260
E-mail: edm@edmbooks.com.sg
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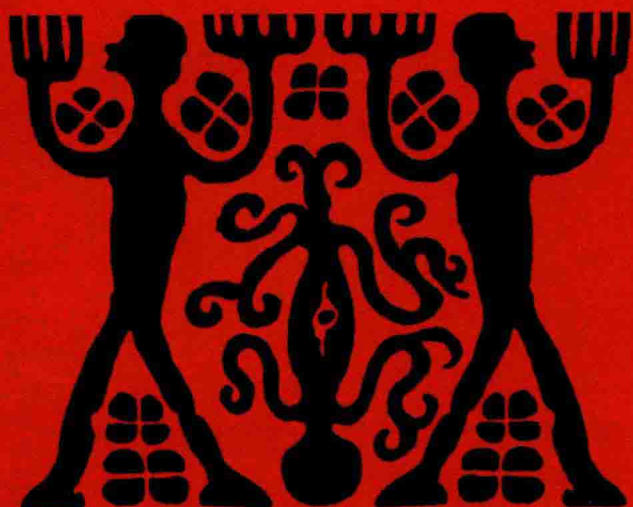
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UNEXPECTED DESTINATIONS

A word from the collector



Rodger Dashow in Boston, 2015, holding a mask he carved as a seven-year-old boy.

Like every great journey, a collection begins with a single step that can lead to unexpected destinations. My own first experience with tribal art spontaneously occurred during my seventh summer in the great outdoors of Camp Tamakwa, Algonquin Park, Canada. As a city boy from Detroit, Michigan, I became so enthused by the allure of log cabins, tepees and Native American culture that I decided to carve my own mask, a sentimental relic now relegated to a dusty corner of my basement.

My father, hoping to keep me occupied, accidentally introduced me to collecting a few years later when he bestowed upon me his long-neglected collections of pre-World War II coins and stamps. As I turned the yellowing pages, I found myself engulfed by a world of exotic destinations - Singapore, Sumatra and Borneo - straight out of a Joseph Conrad novel. My imagination was further stoked by sensational stories of headhunting, noble savages and fierce pirates: 'Watch out, the Bugis man is coming to get you!'

My first serious encounter with tribal art came during my freshman year at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; I discovered a section of the library filled with books about African and Oceanic art, which I voraciously studied in my spare time. Today as I gaze in amazement upon the 1,500 pieces of Indonesian tribal art I amassed over a period of more than thirty years, I am forced to admit that in some sense the Bugis man did capture me. The first serious symptom appeared in 1974, when as a young business executive I swaggered into Manhattan's legendary Hemingway Gallery, selected an African mask and haggled for more than an hour before I proudly walked out into the autumn air with my trophy under my arm.

Oddly my encounter with Indonesian tribal art occurred a decade later while on vacation in Mexico. Bored with my successful but humdrum business life, I had decided to trade in my three-piece suit and reinvent myself as an exotic travel photographer with Oaxaca as my first assignment in 1984. As I boarded a tour bus to the Monte Alban temple, I was bemused to find a doppelganger - a short, balding guy, who, like me, seemed as much interested in the art being offered by itinerant hawkers as he was in the ruins. Steven G. Alpert, the respected tribal art dealer, would later sell me my first piece of Indonesian tribal art. We have remained close friends until today.

My new identity would also bring me frequently to Indonesia. Using Bali as my home base, I would make countless trips by air and sea to remote islands and regions to photograph people and art over the next fifteen years. It was a blissful time because my journeys also gave me the opportunity to add to my burgeoning collection. I became increasingly involved with the international tribal art community and began attending international exhibitions, events, tribal art fairs and lectures. This began in 1991 with the 'Year of Indonesia' exhibitions to which I lent support. I soon became familiar with all the art dealers, curators, scholars and fellow collectors including Bruce W. Carpenter, the expert author of this book, whom I met in Amsterdam in 1986.

As time passed I became keenly aware that my stewardship of an important collection, one of the largest in private hands, was a weighty responsibility. While collections come and go, the creative artistry of those who made the individual pieces endures far longer and should be appreciated by many more. I began to lend pieces to museums, including Boston, Salem, Dallas and New York, and for inclusion in publications. I sponsored art lectures at my loft in Boston where the collection is housed. Still I wanted to do more and was persuaded that a book was the next step for a number of reasons. Foremost of these was the realisation that although many of the cultures that had made the art and which I had experienced first hand had survived into the 20th century, most were in severe decline or have since disappeared. A book is thus a permanent record of these great traditions.

During my attempts to make sense of the inner meaning of these objects I love so much, I came across the writings of the American philosopher, Joseph Campbell. His incredible ability to weave multiple disciplines has given me great insight into the objects, as well as my affinity for them. I was particularly inspired by his discussion of the human collective unconsciousness and archetypes because it made me understand that the intuitive decisions I had made are strongly rooted in the universal tribal past that all humans share. I am greatly honoured that the Joseph Campbell Foundation has agreed to write a preface to this book in honour of this seminal thinker and fellow art lover. I end by thanking all who have helped and guided me over the years in growing my collection and making *Indonesian Tribal Art*.

Rodger S. Dashow



TESTAMENT TO A COLLECTOR'S EYE



My first interaction with Rodger Dashow, in 1982, was watching his shiny pate and portly but powerful frame emerge from an ancient Zapotec structure at Monte Alban in the Oaxaca Valley of Mexico. Striding up to me with an infectious grin and sparkling eyes, Rodger remarked that we were the only two fellows on the tour with women taller than ourselves. From that moment on we embarked on an enduring and frolic-filled friendship.

Rodger, a self-made businessman, was already a savvy traveller and not a tourist when I first met him. He was someone who embraced adventure, alien environments, new cuisines and, of course, art. As a collector, Rodger's curiosity was as sweeping as his personality, and his home was filled with curios, folk art, and just about anything from his travels that amused him.

After our first meeting, Rodger's interest in Indonesia was piqued. His friends began to advise him to buy higher quality art, and Rodger, in his good humor and wisdom, obliged. The journey of an ardent collector had begun anew, and I was lucky enough to be both Rodger's friend and initial guide into the inviting world of Indonesia.

For Rodger, it was love at first sight. He always amazed me with his hardiness and unflinching desire to go, and to collect, where others had not easily gone before. At first we had a standing joke between us as Rodger would go to Borneo or Sulawesi, find himself in some remote place, and there in several instances someone would ask him if he knew 'Mr Steven'. A bit shocked, but always quick with a riposte, Rodger would offer a cherubic smile and say 'Oh yes, my younger brother Steven' followed by 'What treasures might you have for sale?'

In 2000, Rodger built his first house in Bali, and then followed by building a beach house for himself and his beloved Annie, and, after they were married in 2007, decided to split their time between Boston and Bali. Annie's support and passion for Indonesia equaled Rodger's. Throughout these years Rodger began to collect more items in the field and buy from a number of dealers and auction houses, while eagerly honing his own taste. The Dashow Collection is not only the result of Rodger's doggedness, but it is an important and broadly based collection that contains many masterworks from Indonesia's most interesting tribal cultures.

Beyond amassing material, every collector also lends their personalities and talents to the enterprise. Rodger often hosts events in his loft, and has supported

OPPOSITE PAGE: Rodger Dashow,
Vietnam, 1989.

THIS PAGE: Batak Karo Knife (*pisso*), RDC.

exhibitions such as Andrew Tavarrelli's highly regarded show and catalogue, *Protection, Power, and Display* at Boston College, and loaned material to various institutions, including the Dallas Museum of Art. Walking around Rodger's unique home in Boston and listening to him discourse on his pieces and his happiness in sharing them with other collectors, scholars or just the curious is always a joy. Boston is in fact a mini-Mecca for Indonesian material: the Bertha and William Teel Collection is now housed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Karob Collection, one of America's oldest collections of traditional Indonesian art, is privately owned there.

As someone who restores buildings, cars and motorcycles, and can make just about anything, Rodger has the ability to use his hands in prosaic and creative ways. His practical know-how lends itself to understanding questions of form and function, and in being able to better comprehend how a tool was once used. Rodger's particular skill set, coupled with the subtle knowledge that an object must suit its owner's 'soul' as well as their 'status', engenders connoisseurship and a deeper appreciation of Indonesia's traditional art forms.

During the period that Rodger has been collecting, both the quality and the proliferation of fakes and the invention of new hybrid styles for the Western art market has increased dramatically. As a craftsman, and as someone who lived in Bali, Rodger could apply a lifetime of skills to ferreting out the genuine from the bogus. This is no easy task for any of us. Rodger's willingness to share his experiences with others has contributed to our understanding of traditional art from Indonesia.

The Dashow Collection in its size and quality is a veritable feast for the eyes. As one enjoys it, one should be conscious of the fact that a number of the pieces in this collection are unique and are certainly very rare survivors of a past that no longer exists. Despite colonization, the pressures of modernity, the introduction of new religions - and the amazing evolution of Indonesia into a modern nation forged from 18,000 islands - the pieces that have been lovingly collected by Rodger and Annie stand as a testament not only to a collector's eye, but to Indonesia's strength, beauty and cultural diversity.

Steven G. Alpert





ESSAYS



LIVING MYTH

'A real artist is the one who has learned to recognize and to render the radiance of all things as an epiphany or showing forth of the truth.'

– Joseph Campbell

It was Sigmund Freud who reminded us that in mythology we have repositories, not only of human artistic and symbolic consciousness, but of human history and psychology as well. Rollo May remarked that myths are 'involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings' - the archetypal patterns in human consciousness made manifest. 'Where there is consciousness, there will be myth,' he argued, suggesting that myth and self-consciousness are to some degree synonymous. Carl Jung explained:

'Myths are the psychic life of the primitive tribe, which immediately falls to pieces and decays when it loses its mythological heritage, like a man who has lost his soul. ... Man has always lived with a myth, and we think we are able to be born today and to live in no myth, without history. That is a disease. That's absolutely abnormal ... [To wipe out the] connection with the past ... is a mutilation of the human being.'

Yet it was Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) who struck a collective nerve when he addressed our contemporary mythless malaise. In doing so, he did more to popularize the study of mythology and its relationship to human consciousness than any other scholar of his time. His seminal work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, originally published in 1949, continues to be a bestseller and was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 most important books published in the 20th century. Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth, his six-part conversation with

journalist Bill Moyers, initially aired on PBS in 1988 and soon became one of public broadcasting's most watched programs.

In *The Hero*, Campbell posited that there was a substrata underlying the ontological, metaphysical, and epistemological claims advanced by humankind's seemingly divergent mythological traditions that unified them into a single, identifiable 'meta-pattern'. Borrowing a term from James Joyce, he called this common structure the 'Monomyth'.

In Campbell's lifelong examination of the cognitive 'technologies' humanity has developed to access and expand symbolic consciousness - mythologies, if you will, which are, as he was fond of noting, 'other people's religions' - he became convinced that humankind's repository of such knowledge could be seen collectively as a psycho-spiritual map for traversing the landscapes of becoming. Myths, he insisted, provided mileposts along the road of a lifecycle, be it personal or societal, and the Monomyth was the crimson thread of continuity beneath the incomprehensible diversity of our spiritual ideologies. It is, he claimed, a universal template buried within the world's wisdom traditions that serves to guide an initiate through the progressive stages of spiritual growth, from emergence and initiation to transformation and return. The Monomyth is, so to say, a map that an individual can use to navigate the phases of a proper and meaningful life within a given culture.