

IN *tribute*

David Bromwell collector

by Gregory Ghent



Last October, the San Francisco Bay Area lost one of its most refined collectors and a true gentleman with the passing of C. David Bromwell.

David had a fine eye for the exquisite, and over the last fifteen years he focused on small-scale artworks from around the world. He practiced an almost Buddhist quality of moderation, and moderately sized tribal art was a perfect fit for his lifestyle. He also collected contemporary art, again focusing on small but important works by California artists such as Wayne Thiebaud.

Although shy, David welcomed visitors to view his artfully displayed collections. He was exceedingly generous with donations to Bay Area museums and loans to exhibitions.

Although he was in fragile health following a complete bone marrow transplant in 1989, he took complete advantage of the rich local culture, attending concerts and dining in ethnic restaurants. His family also kept a house in Italy

and just last year purchased another on the Pacific coast of Mexico.

In contrast to a somewhat reticent exterior, David could be very passionate about artistic brilliance and social injustice. He was acutely empathetic for the plight of indigenous people in developing countries displaced by multinational corporations, and intensely aware of the damage wreaked by big business on global ecology. He did something more than opine—he acted. He was the first person I knew to buy a hybrid car and he supported migrant families in many ways, including housing.

For a short time in the early 1980s, David maintained a modest ethnic art gallery in Stinson Beach, but only as a side endeavor. This truly kindhearted man was totally devoted to loving his wife and two sons, aiding a large immigrant second family, and ever refining his collection of exquisite artworks.

Armand Labbé curator and scholar

by Karen Silverberg



Armand Labbé, director of research and collections, and chief curator at the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art in Santa Ana, California, died April 2, 2005, after a long and valiant battle with cancer. He was acclaimed for his scholarship, skill as an educator, personal charm, and generosity. His loss is a tremendous blow to the ethnic art community.

Labbé was a respected authority on pre-Columbian art and on traditional societies in Africa, Thailand, and Oceania. He curated a number of significant exhibitions at the Bowers, including *Colombia Before Columbus*, which was the first exhibition of Columbian pre-Hispanic ceramics in North America. Other major exhibitions Labbé curated include *Ban Chiang: Prehistoric Treasures of Northeast Thailand*, the most comprehensive exhibit of this early metalworking civilization, and *Tribute to the Gods: Treasures of the Museo del Oro*. In addition to his work at the Bowers,

Labbé was vice chairman of the board of directors at the Mingei International Museum in San Diego.

The author of many scholarly books and articles, Labbé wrote *Colombia Before Columbus* (Rizzoli, 1994), which received commendations from the Colombian government and the Colombian Institute of Anthropology.

A native of Lowell, Massachusetts, Labbé graduated *cum laude* from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, with a bachelor's degree in anthropology, and earned his master's degree in the same subject from Cal State Fullerton. He taught anthropology and art history at Santa Ana College and UC Irvine. He had been a part-time faculty member at Fullerton since 1997 and a research associate in the department of anthropology since 1996.

The Bowers Museum's board of governors has decided to name the museum's historic wing in his memory.