



## Bruno Piazza

(19/01/1941–28/10/2011)

By Cédric Le Dauphin

A friend is gone.

He left as he lived, with dignity and honor, as he had decided. His smile slipped for the last time between two Balinese seas, without fanfare or public attention. In disappearing, he leaves us with the memory of beautiful aesthetics and charming elegance.

His whole route, from Science Po and diplomacy to photography, and from art nouveau to tribal art, traced a path around the world and through time: a furrow full of friendships, shared joys, and loves retained.

He was able to find and touch people sensitive to his taste, and he showed us what man is capable of if he makes the effort. He was always a generous host, compassionate without condescension and radiating intelligence and culture.

Always thirsty for knowledge, full of humor and simplicity, he loved beautiful, noble materials, quality work, and the radiance of fine craftsmanship.

His hope was strong, with extraordinary courage on a daily basis.

I have lost a friend, as has our world.

## William Siegmann

By Kevin D. Dumouchelle

African art lost one of its luminaries when William Siegmann, Curator Emeritus of the Arts of Africa and the Pacific Islands at the Brooklyn Museum, passed away peacefully at his home on November 29, 2011.

Bill had a long-standing and deeply personal connection to Liberia, which began with service in the Peace Corps in the late 1960s and continued throughout his life. He taught at Cuttington University, where he also founded the Africana Museum. Bill returned to Liberia to pursue research between 1974 and 1976, which was supported by a Fulbright-Hays fellowship. Upon his return to the U.S., he served as a curator, first at the Museum of the Society of African Missions, in Tenafly, NJ, and then at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco from 1979–84. Upon being awarded another Fulbright fellowship in 1984, Bill once again returned to Liberia. In conjunction with the West African Museums Programme, he served as Director of the National Museum of Liberia in Monrovia, where he oversaw the renovation of the museum's nineteenth-century building and the expansion and reinstallation of its collections.

During his tenure at Brooklyn from 1987 to 2007, Bill acquired more than 1,600 objects for the museum, a prolific record of considered connoisseurship that is unmatched in the history of Brooklyn's African and Pacific collections. He also organized at least eight major exhibitions at Brooklyn, including *African Art and Leadership, Image and Reflection: Adolph Gottlieb's Pictographs and African Sculpture, In Pursuit of the Spiritual: Oceanic Art Given by Mr. and Mrs. John A. Friede and Mrs. Melville W. Hall, African Furniture*, and *Masterworks of African Art from the Collection of Beatrice Riese*, as well as four separate re-installations of the African and Pacific Islands collections. He authored *African Art: A Century at the Brooklyn Museum* (Prestel, 2009), the first catalogue on the museum's collection. Most recently, Bill served as a consultant to the Saint Louis Art Museum.

Bill was one of the leading experts on the arts of Liberia and Sierra Leone. He wrote extensively on the arts of masquerades and age grades in this region and on issues in museology, collecting, and interpretation. Bill also shared his skills in collections development



broadly, conducting frequent seminars on museum management and curatorial training in Europe, Africa, and South America through grants from UNESCO and the U.S. Department of State. He also taught at numerous universities in Africa and the U.S.

I know that Bill's considerable generosity and openness of spirit have touched many in our field over the years. He has been a gracious friend and mentor to a great number, myself included. He was an invaluable resource, whose guidance and intellect was treasured. That strength, warmth, and wit remained unbowed, until the end.

## Virginia Fields

By Alan Grinnell

The tribal art world lost a beloved friend when Virginia Fields died in her sleep last June 16 during a recent trip to Mexico City. She, her husband, David, and her assistant, Victoria, were there to attend a conference related to Los Angeles County Museum of Art's upcoming 2012 exhibit, *Children of the Plumed Serpent: The Legacy of Quetzalcoatl in Ancient Mexico*.

Ginny, who came to LACMA in 1989 as the museum's first curator of pre-Columbian art, was a distinguished Maya scholar but developed an expertise that spanned all of the Americas. During her twenty-two years at LACMA, she turned it into a powerhouse for the exhibition and study of pre-Columbian art and cultures. Under her leadership numerous outstanding exhibits traveled to other museums accompanied by distinguished catalogues that combined state-of-the-art scholarship with resplendent images. Everything she did was meticulously researched, elegantly presented, and richly documented. In the field of pre-Columbian scholars, she was highly respected, both because of her many collaborations and her status as a Fellow and member of the Advisory Board at Dumbarton Oaks, the pre-Columbian center of Harvard University.

She was also active in the local community of art collectors. For more than twenty years, she was a regular at Ethnic Arts Council events, making its members aware of LACMA's plans in her quiet, unassuming way. At every EAC grant-ing period she submitted a proposal that was thoughtful and educational, asking only for what she needed. It was always awarded. In turn she rewarded Los Angeles and the world at large with fascinating exhibits and exciting symposia.

Although Ginny was a soft-spoken and gentle person, she could be extremely persuasive and determined. And she had ambitious plans. She wanted to build LACMA's pre-Columbian collection, starting with the superb Mexican material that the museum already had. She more than quadrupled the museum's holdings, adding the important Kramer and Ranere Collections as well as many great Maya and south Mexican pieces, and some fine material from Panama. When Michael Govan arrived as the museum's new director, she found a strong ally who also wanted to make LACMA the world's premier museum for Latin American art, and together they were making great progress toward that end. They were developing plans for a research and education center to be based at LACMA, a Dumbarton Oaks of the West. She was determined to have better exhibition space for pre-Columbian art and reportedly made regular unannounced visits to Govan's office to ask when she would get her new galleries. Indeed, rumor has it that at a museum retreat at Chichen Itza, where Govan had gone swimming in the noted cenote, she grabbed the rope that was to be used to haul him back out, and asked him again, pointedly, when she was going to get her new space.

Ginny was the genuine article—an enormous asset to the whole community of pre-Columbian scholars and enthusiasts. We will long treasure the interactions we had with her and hope that her visions for LACMA will become reality.

