

SPURLOCK

MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER
Winter 2006

The newsletter of
the Spurlock Museum

INSIDE

3
CURATOR RECOGNITION:
KAREN THOMPSON

4
THE JULIA KELLMAN
COLLECTION

5
FOOTBALL, CRUISES,
AND A MUSEUM

7
STUDENT STAFF

8
EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMMING



A MESSAGE FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

By Douglas Brewer

If a museum is to succeed in a community, it must have behind it an organized, dedicated, enthusiastic, and energetic group of people with a purpose—in short, a viable board. Theoretically, this diverse group shares a common goal: to provide a museum of the highest quality. Few board members, however, begin with any idea of the complexity of their task or the nature of their relationships with the professional museum staff and the community they serve. If such a group is to achieve its goals, its authority and responsibilities must be clear.

A board member's first duty is to understand the purposes, programs, and priorities of the museum in order to represent the museum to the public and to make the right recommendations to the board's executive committee (and ultimately to the director). To fulfill these obligations, members of the board must do their homework, which includes:

- demonstrating an awareness of the museum, its policies, and programs;
- demonstrating knowledge of the museum's mission and long-term goals;
- assisting in the identification of potential museum friends and donors;
- adhering to museum ethical standards and board bylaws;
- attending board meetings and participating on board committees; and
- helping the executive committee maintain forward progress in their endeavors.

The board's executive committee is composed of 12 members, collectively known as the "trustees." The trustees function for the board between meetings. When boards become too large to manage, trustees often have to assume additional duties and authority. This can create a downward spiral of events, whereby board members can often become disenfranchised, leaving the executive committee to carry out an even larger portion of the workload. To correct this common problem, board size must be made manageable and the trustees must be given specific chores that are vital to the museum's success—such as reviewing bylaws, carrying out strategic planning initiatives, and providing for and participating in committees and their membership.

Board membership—and the duties and responsibilities it carries—is an important facet of the museum. Board members need to attend meetings, be informed about the museum, and work with the trustees and with the staff to better serve our community.

WINTER 2006

WILLIAM R. AND CLARICE V. SPURLOCK MUSEUM

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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Urbana, IL 61801
Phone: (217) 333-2360
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Director, Douglas J. Brewer

Museum Hours:
Tuesday: Noon - 5 pm
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday: 9 am - 5 pm
Saturday: 10 am - 4 pm
Sunday: Noon - 4 pm
Monday: closed

www.spurlock.uiuc.edu

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College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



Karen Thompson works on a traditional piece of bobbin lace in her home. The Bird-of-Paradise flower picture on the table and the world map in lace on the wall were designed and made by Karen, as were many of the lace ornaments on the Christmas tree.

CURATOR RECOGNITION KAREN THOMPSON

By Dr. Yu (Ian) Wang

Karen Thompson has worked with fibers all her life. As a child in Denmark, she learned to knit, crochet, net, embroider, and macramé. She learned tatting and lacemaking as an adult, the latter in a whirlwind session on the last day of her mother's visit with her in America. From there she taught herself the rest through American and Danish lacemaking books. Thompson now creates both traditional and original pieces, including framed artwork and jewelry.

After her family moved to Urbana in 2004, Thompson immediately started volunteering at the Spurlock Museum. Since April 2005 she has been working as a curator for the spring 2007 exhibition "Why Knot?" in the Museum's Campbell Gallery. The whole exhibition team has appreciated her hard work and expertise.

Thompson's lacemaking career has taken her around the world and she keeps in touch with students and lacemaking friends in many different countries. Her expertise has allowed her to teach her techniques to hundreds of people, including her son and daughter.

Thompson began working with the Smithsonian Institute's lace collection eight years ago. She identifies each artifact, and then produces an image to be placed at a later date on the museum's website. She also gives monthly, behind-the-scenes tours, including a discussion of the history of lace in the context of fashion, economics, politics, the lives of lacemakers, and other related topics. These activities help keep the collection accessible to the public. Through her work with the Smithsonian, Thompson has been asked to identify lace at the White House, Mt. Vernon, the Hillwood Museum and Gardens in Washington, D.C., the Spurlock Museum, and Purdue, where she received her AB in elementary education and her MA in special education.

Thompson speaks and teaches at national and international conventions, and she

has founded and served on the boards of many lacemaking organizations. She has translated four technical lace books from Danish to English, self-published two books of original patterns, and has begun a series of articles on the lace held by the Smithsonian Institute. Her most recent article, "The Princess Lace Machine or Loom: Neither Machine nor Loom," was published in the November/December 2006 edition of *PieceWork Magazine*.

"Humans have manipulated fibers from the very earliest times to create objects to aid in food gathering as well as to protect and beautify the body and home," says Thompson. The "Why Knot?" exhibit will celebrate the people, techniques, and tools that create and use some of these open textiles. The exhibit is organized into several sections and the focus will be on four major areas:

- techniques and tools of fiber manipulation;
- artifacts created using these techniques;
- the people who created or used the textiles; and
- the cultural and historical context.

The title "Why Knot?" is meant to create the double meaning of *why we knot* strings and also *why not* explore knotting and other fiber manipulation. This aspect has not been explored in previous exhibits at the Spurlock Museum. It is hoped that visitors will gain an appreciation for the great variety of techniques used in manipulating fibers for the people who create and use them.

"We resisted adding a longer explanatory title, hoping the short title will create interest in exploring the exhibit," says Thompson.



Above: Traditional style Danish bobbin lace pillow handmade in Denmark in the 1970s. The 44 bobbins required for this 3/4-inch wide lace are English Midlands style with spangles (ring of beads). Wood and bone bobbins are embellished with metal wire, paint, inlaid wood, carved rings, mother-and-babes inserts, among others. Most are hand-turned and carved in the late 20th century.

Below: Bird-of-Paradise flower designed and made by Karen in the bobbin lace technique using silk thread.



RECENT ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHT THE JULIA KELLMAN COLLECTION

By Dr. Yu (Ian) Wang

The collection of Highland Mayan women's weaving donated recently to the Spurlock Museum by Professor Julia Kellman is the result of three summers of research in Guatemala in which she studied the significance of weaving in the lives of Mayan women.

Kellman is an associate professor of art education in the School of Art and Design and an associate professor of psychiatry in the School of Medicine at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In addition to her teaching, her research explores the means by which artists in marginalized and difficult circumstances make and use art to create personal meaning. Her work further explores the relationship of narratives and cultural contexts to the art-making process. She has written articles on Guatemalan Mayan women's weaving, the place of narrative in art, art-making with children with autism, and art and the construction of meaning by people with

HIV/AIDS. She published a book in 2001 titled *Autism, Art, and Children: The Stories We Draw* (Bergin and Garvey).

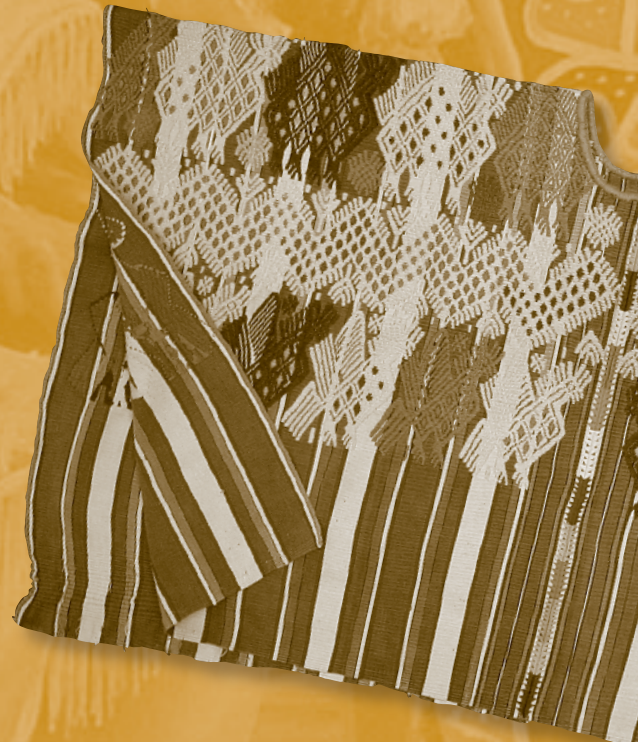
This collection of 49 artifacts includes women's *huipiles* or blouses, lengths of fabric used to make these garments, thread used to decorate the garments, and a few paintings that portray people wearing similar clothing. The fabrics are woven on a backstrap loom in single- or double-face brocade—obtained, in most cases, from the weaver/wearer herself. The huipiles served as an important part of the documentation of her research. "First, because they are examples of each woman's weaving expertise and illustrate the connection with the age-old place of backstrap weaving in Mayan life. Second, because they illustrate the importance and socio-cultural meanings of hand-woven women's garments in Mayan society. And third,

because they are mementos of my interactions with women that I came to know and value as friends," says Kellman.

Kellman also points out that the collection illustrates a moment in time in the Kaqchikel-speaking area of Guatemala while at the same time exhibiting the continuing importance of weaving in the lives of Mayan women, illustrating a visible link between modern weaving and the ancient Mayan past.

Weaving has been an important art form since pre-Columbian times and it continues to be a major art form in traditional Mayan society. Images of ancient garments showing some of the same patterns found on women's garments today can be seen on carved stone stele and other architectural elements from early Mayan history 250-900 C.E.

To accompany the artifact collection Kellman also provided the Museum with





documentary multimedia teaching and librarian materials—including three videotapes about Mayan music, weaving, and culture; 120 images (photographs/slides) of weavers and their families; and painters' samples of thread used by the weavers, along with approximately 40 books on Mayan weaving and textiles.

From the Museum's point of view, these materials are especially important because they all directly relate to Kellman's donation and many are hard to obtain outside the U.S. These books and images enable the Museum to document and study the collection even further with faculty, students, and researchers. This will prove especially useful if the Museum chooses to develop an exhibition on the collection in the future.

The entire collection of artifacts made by these weavers and painters can be viewed on the Spurlock Museum website by searching the online database. Three searches must be made individually using the criteria: "2004.15," "2006.04," and "2006.08."

Above: Woman's Blouse
(2004.15.0036)

Inset: Bundles of Thread:
(2004.15.0034A-X)

Far left: Painting: Cofrade
(2006.04.0001)

Left: Woman's Blouse
(2004.15.0008)



FOOTBALL, CRUISES, AND A MUSEUM

By Robin Fossum and Sarah Wisseman

How did football fans Dick and Gayl Pyatt end up having a gallery at the Spurlock Museum named after their family? Dick Pyatt, a season ticket holder for Illinois games for more than 50 years, and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumna Gayl Pyatt, an attorney, took a cruise. The rest is history.

Dick Pyatt, a native of Pinckneyville, Ill., attended school in St. Louis before returning to Illinois to work for the family business. He retired as president and CEO of Pyatt Funeral Home and Pyatt Partners. Both Dick and his family are avid Illinois athletic fans who have attended hundreds of games over the years.

Gayl, a 1964 UIUC graduate, is originally from Carbondale, Ill. After she obtained her first degree at the University of Illinois, she continued her education at Michigan State and at Southern Illinois University prior to starting her private law practice in Pinckneyville. Gayl never lost interest in her alma mater. In 1989, she accepted an offer to serve as a member of the University of Illinois Foundation, eventually becoming the first woman to be elected as president of the foundation in 1993.

In 1997, Dick and Gayl joined a University of Illinois Alumni Association trip to Egypt that included a Nile cruise. There they had a special opportunity to get to know their academic host, Spurlock Museum director and Egyptian archaeologist Douglas Brewer, and became fast friends. Following the trip, Dick Pyatt joined the Spurlock Museum Board.

Both Pyatts found it very rewarding to be part of the evolution of the Spurlock Museum of World Cultures. They were fascinated by behind-the-scenes tours and learning about the needs of a growing museum. The Pyatts chose to fund the Simonds Pyatt Gallery of European Cultures because of their love of European travel and their desire to make a lasting contribution.

As past president of the Spurlock Museum Board, Dick Pyatt continues to drive up from Pinckneyville every few months for board meetings at the Museum. Dick and Gayl are enthusiastic regarding the upcoming undergraduate Museum Studies Program at the Spurlock Museum and are continually involved in special Museum projects.

Dick and Gayl have always had a special relationship with the University of Illinois. The Museum is grateful for their generous contributions and involvement. For the Pyatts, football and basketball are always a great time—and the Spurlock Museum is always a winner.



Dr. Clark Cunningham and
Dr. Yu (Ian) Wang

LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear members of our Spurlock Museum Board, friends,
and supporters:

Before you have opened this issue of our newsletter, you may have already had the opportunity to read the inaugural issue of the *Spurlock Museum Magazine*. This new initiative is very exciting and I am very pleased to inform you that after more than two years of planning and hard work, we have a publication team in place that will make our magazine a regular annual publication at the start of every fall semester.

As the president of the Spurlock Museum Board, I am extremely honored and pleased to announce that after our last annual board meeting held on September 15, 2006, and followed by our first new Board of Trustees' meeting in October 2006, Dr. Clark Cunningham was officially elected the vice president of the Spurlock Museum Board.

As you may all know, Dr. Cunningham's professional involvement with the Museum traces back to the World Heritage Museum. He is currently professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and was instrumental in building the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Illinois. He is widely regarded on campus as an inspiring colleague, teacher, and mentor among his students.

Dr. Cunningham is very familiar with and an expert on the Museum's Balinese holdings. He included some of these holdings in the Spurlock Asian Gallery to illustrate one of the themes of the Southeast Asian section of that gallery: the historical Indian/Hindu influence on the culture and arts of Southeast Asia. He was also a curator for the very successful exhibition, "Visions of the Unseen: Picturing Balinese Ceremony and Myth" which took place from September 13, 2005, to February 4, 2006, at the Spurlock Museum.

Just an interesting coincidence, both Dr. Cunningham and I attended Oxford University in England to study social anthropology under Professor Rodney Needham. Clark studied at Oxford in the 1950s, while I was there in the later 1980s. Now we are serving together on the Spurlock Museum Board and we share a common goal, our 200 percent dedication and commitment to the continuing success of the Museum.

Recently, as part of our Museum's accreditation application process, I was asked about the importance of our Museum. I would like to share my answer with you and express my gratitude for all of your continuing support to the Spurlock Museum.

"It is a body of knowledge, cultural heritage, and understanding. It is a center for education, research, and collection/exhibition. It connects our communities far and near. It improves our quality of life and has a positive impact on the economic growth of the community. It is also a vehicle for social changes and further development."

Sincerely,
Dr. Yu (Ian) Wang

HOW THE SPURLOCK MUSEUM GUILD HELPS THE MUSEUM



The Spurlock Museum Guild (SMG) members help the Museum in a number of ways: serving on the board, acting as docents, and assisting in

the description, preservation, and registration of objects, to name a few. But the largest amount of contributed time by far goes into the organization of the Guild's annual auction.

SMG annual auctions have raised more than \$300,000 since they began more than 15 years ago. As you might imagine, it takes hundreds of volunteer hours to make a successful event. In 2006, auction chairs Robin Fossum and Joy Thornton-Walter organized a committee of around a dozen people, who meet throughout the year. The first order of business was to choose a theme related to a Museum exhibit or collection. Recently, Guild member and art and design professor, Robin Douglas, invited her students to submit designs based on the theme to be used on invitations, posters, and programs. The artwork chosen for the 2006 Greek Auction featured warriors from a black figure vase set against a fiery background of sizzling oranges and yellows.

Gathering donations from local merchants and other friends of the Museum takes several months of concentrated effort. Volunteers make

Student staff members at the Spurlock Museum

Front Row: Jeanna Jones, Lauren Weber,
Julianne Chiu, Teresa Rende

Middle Row: Isaiah Stokes, Kevin Reader,
Dan Caughey, Karley Klopping, Kristin Lang

Back Row: Paul Elvikis, Robin Kuprewicz,
Haley Grant, Monika Popow



STUDENT STAFF AT THE SPURLOCK MUSEUM

By Sarah Wisseman

All over the Spurlock Museum, students are hard at work in different sections. Most of their work in Collections, Education, Registration, Information Technology, and Special Events is behind the scenes in storerooms and workrooms below the public galleries. The Spurlock Museum currently employs about 24 undergraduates and four graduate students.

In Collections, students do everything from dusting cases to assisting senior staff with the installation of exhibits. They work closely with both Registration and Education, pulling artifacts for scholars to study, packing and moving thousands of artifacts every year, and building educational kits for local schools. For example, industrial design major Melissa Sotelo designed traveling cases with special compartments to hold a child's kimono and several related materials that will soon be available on loan through the Museum's Educational Resource Center.

In Education, students are actively engaged in researching exhibits, documenting artifacts in the Teaching Collection, producing mailings, and preparing materials for programs like "Around the World Wednesdays." They work closely with Information Technology, preparing text and video clips for new Web pages. Some, like Jeanna Jones, stay with the Museum for years and develop skills in many areas, accepting new responsibilities as needed.

In Registration, the student staff members inventory, research, and catalogue artifacts down to the smallest detail: weight, measurements, and materials. They learn digital photography, track locations of artifacts around the Museum, and write articles for "Artifact of the Month" on the Museum's website.

The talent and dedication of these students is remarkable. Many, such as Jen Shatswell in Special Events, use the skills they acquired during their time at the Spurlock Museum to land good jobs in related fields. At least two former students have gone on to become registrars and interim directors at other museums.

Senior staffers agree that students are the Museum's best resources. They contribute to every aspect of running the Spurlock Museum, including writing manuals for training new students. Hats off to all of them.

phone calls, send letters, visit stores, and pick up items personally. Guild members themselves contribute a significant number of items to be sold—including catered meals in their homes for small groups, handmade food specialty items and getaways in far-away vacation spots like this year's stay at a member's farmhouse near Ephesus. SMG women also baked dozens of Karidopeta, Kourabiedes, Koulourakia, and pieces of baklava to be served as desserts after the buffet dinner.

As the date approaches, lists of hundreds of addresses are printed out from the Guild's database and members gather to hand-address invitations at a luncheon hosted each year by Claire Skaperdas. The committee and others spend auction day building a display of live auction items—all of which have been photographed individually for video projection at the event. The many silent-auction items are set out on tables and labeled. Bidder numbers are added to paddles, tablecloths are laid, flowers are arranged, and the stage is set for another gala fundraiser for the Spurlock Museum. In 2006 the Greek Auction raised \$26,000 to support the SMG Lecture and Performance Series and for other important Museum educational programs. To join the Guild, please contact our Membership Chair, Helen Burch, at (217) 328-1186.

Paula Watson
Spurlock Museum Guild president

Fall 2006 Undergraduate and Graduate Student Staff

Special Events

Haley Grant
Shuk Ming (Margaret) Li
Danielle (Dani) Lohnes
Monika Popow
Millie Wright

Collections

Laura A'Hearn
Brian Kagel
Joshua Nelson
Kevin Reader
Isaiah Stokes
Alyssa Venere
Laura Hapke (volunteer)

Education

Kate Gustafson
Carolyn Howarter
Jeanna Jones
Kristin N. Lang
Adrienne Pickett
Genevieve Tenoso
Susan Wachowski
Allyson Brown (volunteer)

Information Technology

Paulius Elvikis
Karley Klopping

Registration

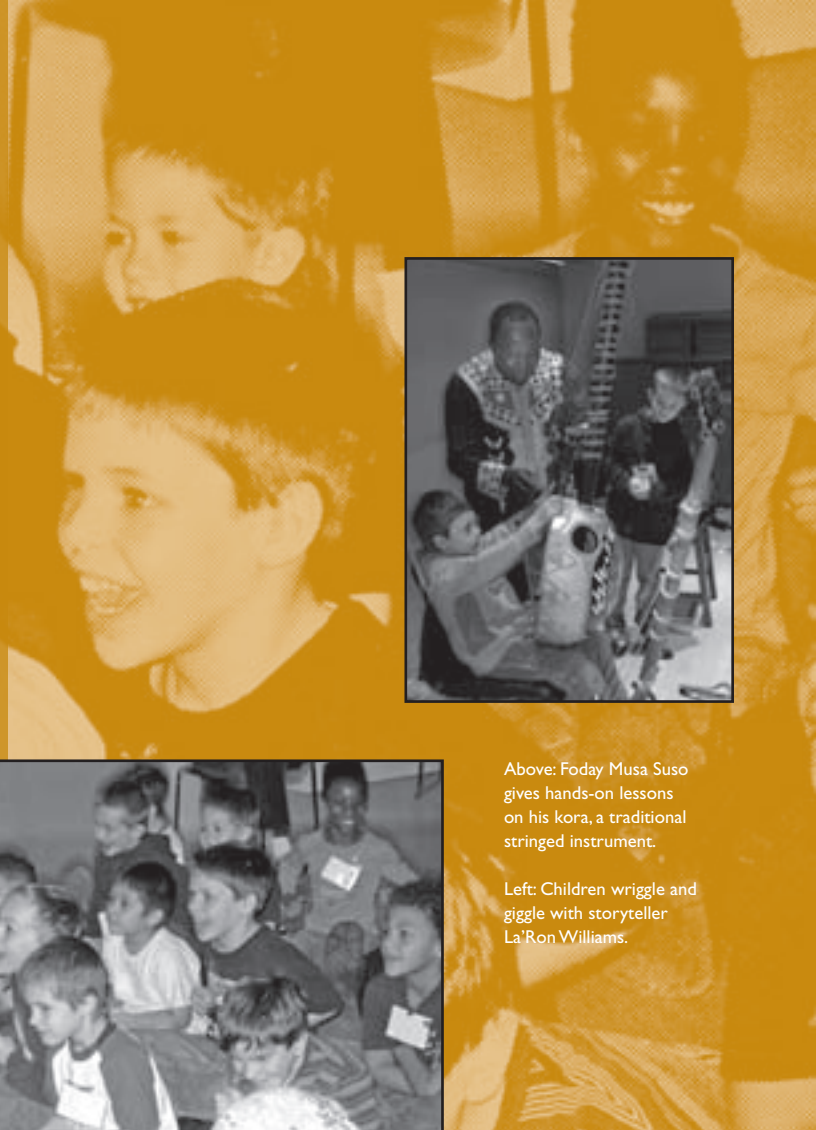
Stephanie Blue
Dan Caughey
Julianne Chiu
Anamae Freehauf
Robin Kuprewicz
Teresa Rende
Lauren Weber
Jennifer Zinnecker
Julie Tegtmeier (volunteer)
Alexa Wirth (volunteer)

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS 2006-07

If you ask any of the nearly 200 children who attended, the highlight of our fall educational programming was undoubtedly a morning in the Museum with celebrated storyteller La'Ron Williams and world-renowned Gambian musician Foday Musa Suso. Area schools brought students to enjoy music and stories of West Africa and to explore the traditions of masks and masquerading in our fall Campbell Gallery exhibit, "Where Animals Dance."

In addition to special programs with performers, three new gallery-based programs are being offered this year. In "A Tapestry of Stories," students will hear multicultural stories with fabrics or cloth as a theme—perhaps the creation of African kente cloth or the Greek tale of Arachne's weaving contest—and then do a fabric-related craft in the Learning Center. In "Culture Focus," teachers can choose three galleries for their students to explore in-depth with one of our educators and enjoy hands-on experiences with artifacts. Children's groups can discover the spring Campbell Gallery exhibit "Why Knot?" through an interactive tour with the exhibit coordinator, a treasure hunt through the Feature Galleries, and a craft to take home.

The Education Section is also delighted to welcome new full-time staff member Brook Taylor, whose background as a math teacher brings exciting new perspectives to the interpretation of our collections and to our educational offerings. Taylor's projects include developing new hands-on activities to attract families to the Museum during our weekend hours.



Above: Foday Musa Suso gives hands-on lessons on his kora, a traditional stringed instrument.



Left: Children wriggle and giggle with storyteller La'Ron Williams.



SPURLOCK MUSEUM

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