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Emblems of Passage: Art of Africa, Oceania and the Americas

Museum of Craft & Folk Art (MOCFA), San Francisco
January 16 – April 7, 2002
Opening reception January 16, 5 - 7

The Museum of Craft & Folk Art presents the exhibition Emblems of Passage: Art of Africa, Oceania and the Americas in conjunction with the Friends of Ethnic Art. Emblems of Passage brings to light the extraordinary quality of art in private Bay Area collections and the power art has to connect cultures. The exhibition and catalogue gather over 100 works of art or "emblems of passage" representing a variety of living and historic cultures from Africa, Oceania and the Americas. Curated by Gregory Ghent, the exhibition features treasures, many never before been exhibited publicly, from the collections of the members of the Friends of Ethnic Art.

The focus of Emblems of Passage is on the role of art in life's passages from birth to death, across cultures and time. Art is created and exchanged to mark important turning points such as birth, initiation, marriage, parenting, and death. This art carries the spirit that moves a person from one stage in life to another. As such, this is a unique "life cycle" exhibition, going beyond an exploration of the culture of origin to include the life of the object in the hands of the collector. The exhibition and catalogue give the collectors the opportunity to tell the story of their relationship to each object, to describe what drew them to a particular work of art and why they added it to their collection.

Emblems of Passage: Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas brings together the Friends of Ethnic Art and the Museum of Craft & Folk Art. Founded in 1974, the Friends of Ethnic Art is a nonprofit member-supported organization that includes 500 individuals who are private collectors, scholars, artists, museum professionals, and art dealers. The Museum of Craft & Folk Art is the only museum in Northern California focusing entirely on contemporary craft, folk art, and tribal arts. MOCFA's exhibitions range from the historical to the contemporary, and to the strange and wonderful.