



ARCTIC TRANSFORMATIONS

The Jewelry of
Denise and Samuel Wallace



Anchorage Museum
OF HISTORY AND ART

NEWS RELEASE

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Arctic Transformations:
The Jewelry of Denise and Samuel Wallace
On view March 13 through June 19

Every piece of Denise Wallace's jewelry tells a story—or in some cases, a folk tale—about the rich cultures of the people of Alaska. The elaborate artworks Wallace creates with her husband Samuel call on the ancient images and stories of her own Alaska Native heritage and that of other indigenous people, as well as more contemporary figures and models from the natural world in the exhibition “Arctic Transformations: The Jewelry of Denise and Samuel Wallace” on view at the Anchorage Museum of History and art March 13 through June 19.

“Arctic Transformations” is a 25-year retrospective of the couple's work. It includes the artists' major works: 16 intricately detailed belts, many of which are now in private collections, as well as 150 individual pieces of jewelry. Of special note is “Yup'ik Dancer Belt,” which depicts 10 dancers linked with 10 Yup'ik masks. The artists use silver, gold, carved and scrimshawed fossil ivory and semi-precious stones in their work.

Denise and Samuel began creating the belts shortly after she graduated in 1982 from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. Many belts are comprised of removable pieces that transform in some way, detaching for use as pendants and earrings or brooches. “Mask Belt II 1989” features masks that open to reveal a fossil ivory inner spirit. Other belts include dancers or drummers with movable arms. “Killer Whale Belt 1984” was the first by the Wallaces to depict Alaskan themes. The 12 sterling silver whales on the piece are inlaid and carved with scenes of Alaska.

Although Denise was born in Seattle, she lived in Alaska after graduating high school and still refers to Cordova, where many of her relatives live, as home. While berry-picking there with her family, Denise found the inspiration to create “Women's Belt I

(more)

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1987.” The figures depict women dancing, making baskets and dolls, cleaning and hanging fish and picking berries.

A topical piece is “Sea Otter Belt 1990,” created after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. The Wallaces fashioned 12 figures – of fossil ivory, sterling silver, 14 karat gold, lapis lazuli and other materials – that paid tribute to the animals so impacted by the spill, while exploring Alaska Native stories of the otter’s original form as human.

The couple’s artworks are in the permanent collections of the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe and the Mingei International Museum of World Folk Art in San Diego, among others.

The exhibition will be on view at the International Folk Museum in San Diego from July 24 to Oct. 16; the Heard Museum in Phoenix from Oct. 27, 2005 to Feb. 2, 2006; the National Museum of the American Indian in New York in starting in February 2006; and will travel to the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe in August 2006.

This exhibition is curated by Roslyn Tunis and is accompanied by a beautifully illustrated book, *Arctic Transformations: The Jewelry of Denise and Samuel Wallace*, by Lois Sherr Dubin, author of *North American Indian Jewelry and Adornment* (2003).

For more information, call (907) 343-6151.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Denise Wallace and Samuel Wallace

Denise Wallace, b. 1957, Seattle, WA

Samuel Wallace, b 1936, Calvin, VA

Individual Exhibitions

“Denise and Samuel Wallace: Ten Year Retrospective Exhibition,” Graythorne Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ, 1996

“Undergoing Transformations,” The Museums at the Blackhawk, Danville, CA, 1993

“Crossroads of Continents,” Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Quebec, 1992

“Northern Images,” Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, CA, 1991

Selected Group Exhibitions

“Jewels of the Southwest,” Arizona Historical Society Museum, Tempe, AZ and Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, Santa Fe, NM, 2002

“Many Beautiful Colors: Jewelry by Native American Artists,” Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, Santa Fe, NM, 2001-2002

“Women Designers in the USA: 1900-2000, Diversity and Difference,” The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, New York, NY, 2000-2001

“Arrows of the Spirit,” Mingei International Museum of World Folk Art, San Diego, CA, 1999-2000

“Fashion Fusion,” Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ 1987-1998

“Visions of Alaska,” DW Studio, Inc., Santa Fe, NM, 1999-2000

“Gifts of the Spirit: Works by Nineteenth Century and Contemporary Native American Artists,” Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA, 1996-1997

“Native American Traditions/Contemporary Responses,” Society for Contemporary Crafts, Pittsburgh, PA, 1996-1997

“Wanaga of Indigenous Art Symposium,” exhibition and lecture, Rotorua, New Zealand, 1995

“This Path We Travel,” National Museum of the American Indian, NYC 1988

“Sun, Moon and Stone,” Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, CA, 1994-1995

“Voices and Visions,” University of California, Museums at the Blackhawk, Danville, CA, 1993

“Native Art to Wear,” Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ, 1989

Museum Permanent Collections

Anchorage Museum of History and Art, Anchorage, AK

Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM

Wheelwright of the American Indian, Santa Fe, NM

Mingei International Museum of World Folk Art, San Diego, CA

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ABOUT THE CURATOR

Roslyn Tunis

Roslyn Tunis has worked as a curator and educator in museums and galleries in New York and California for more than 30 years. She has degrees in art history and anthropology. She was chief curator of art and anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley, Museums at Blackhawk, from 1990 to 1993 and served as adjunct faculty at John F. Kennedy University Graduate Museum Studies Program.

Throughout her career she has focused on the art and culture of the indigenous peoples of North America as well as contemporary fine crafts. Projects of note include:

- “Fusing Traditions: Transformations in Glass by Native American Artists,” Museum of Craft and Folk Art, San Francisco, 2002;
- “The Art of Research: Nelson Graburn and the Aesthetics of Inuit Sculpture,” Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, University of California at Berkeley, 2000;
- “Art as a Reflection of Inuit Culture: Tradition and Change in the 20th Century,” Concord Art Gallery, Concord, CA, 1996;
- “Visions and Voices: Contemporary Native American Artists,” University of California at Berkeley, Museums at Blackhawk, 1993;
- “Ancient Inspirations/Contemporary Interpretations,” Roberson Museum, Binghamton, New York, 1982;
- “The Artistic Spirit of the North American Indian,” Roberson Museum, Binghamton, New York, 1976; and
- “The Artistic Spirit: 5000 Years of Culture and Creativity,” University of California at Berkeley’s Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, 1990.

Roslyn Tunis currently is an independent curator organizing exhibitions, lecturing and consulting nationally.

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Arctic Transformations: The Jewelry of Denise and Samuel Wallace

Mask Belt I, 1985

Fossil walrus ivory, sterling silver

Photo by Kyoshi Togashi



Arctic Transformations: The Jewelry of Denise and Samuel Wallace

Yup'ik Amikuk Mask Pin/pendant, 2001

Sterling silver, fossil ivory

Photo by Kyoshi Togashi



Arctic Transformations: The Jewelry of Denise and Samuel Wallace

Women's Belt I, 1987

Lapis lazuli, sugilite, hickoryite, chrysoprase, opal, jasper, spectrolite, Bruneau jasper,
abalone shell, silicated chrysocolla, fossil walrus, mammoth ivory, sterling silver

Photo by Kyoshi Togashi



Arctic Transformations: The Jewelry of Denise and Samuel Wallace

Yup'ik Dancer Pin/pendant, 1998

Spectrolite, sterling silver, fossil ivory, 14 kt. gold

Photo by Kyoshi Togashi



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Woman in the Moon Pin/Pendant, 1987

Fossil ivory, sterling silver

Photo by Kyoshi Togashi