Patrick McNaughton (Art History, IUB) and Diane Pelrine (IU Art Museum) recently returned from two months in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. They traveled there as part of a faculty exchange between Indiana University and the University of Yaoundé I. Funded by the United States Information Agency, the exchange is part of a five-year cooperation agreement between the two universities.

At the university, McNaughton taught a course on Pre-Columbian Mexican art, Pelrine taught one on the art of the South Pacific, and they jointly conducted a seminar examining current issues in the study of non-Western art and museology. As part of the exchange, they brought books, a slide projector, an overhead projector, and a cassette recorder, which were left in Yaoundé for the art history faculty and students there.

In addition to teaching, McNaughton and Pelrine, who were accompanied by their two children, also traveled to see the countryside, art, and architecture outside of the capital. One of their most dramatic trips was a night-time visit to Mt. Cameroon, where they witnessed the flow of lava down the side of the erupting volcano. Elaborately decorated canoes in coastal Limbe, a first-hand view of the often photographed meeting house at Bandjoun, and a two-hour guided tour of treasures in the sultan’s museum in Fumban were highlights.

Thanks to Jean-Paul Notue, an art historian at the University of Yaoundé I who had been in Indiana during the spring 1998 semester as part of the exchange, they were also able to visit the palaces of several fons, or traditional rulers of western Cameroon, who maintain masks, thrones, figures, and other leadership objects that are displayed publicly only on ceremonial occasions.

These visits, along with discussions with colleagues at the University of Yaoundé, have suggested several research projects which McNaughton and Pelrine hope that they or IU graduate students may be able to realize at a future time.

McNaughton and Pelrine are the last IU representatives to take part in the exchange. The previous participants were Robert Arnove (Education, IUB), Andrea Singer (Library, IUB), Marcia Segal (Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, IUS), Phyllis Martin (History, IUB), and Eileen Julien (Comparative Literature, IUB).

From the University of Yaoundé I, Emmanuel Ngwang (English), Verkijika Fanso (History), Carl Ebobissé (Linguistics), Nol Alempong (Literature), and Jean-Paul Notue (Art History) have all spent three months teaching, lecturing, and doing research in Bloomington. Joseph-Marie Essomba, an archaeologist at the University of Yaoundé I, will visit Bloomington this fall as the last exchange participant.

– Diane Pelrine
IU Art Museum