IU Art Museum Features *Spirits in Wood: Contemporary Sculpture from Malaysia*

The exhibit features pieces selected from a large collection of Orang Asli sculpture, collected by Mary Ruth Linville Jumper. She lived in Malaysia from 1985 to 1991 while her husband, Roy Jumper, was the provost of an Indiana University academic program known as the Malaysia Cooperative Program (1985–95). The exhibit will be on display at the IU Art Museum from December 5, 2000 through April 1, 2001. Mary Jumper gave a special lecture, "The Orang Asli and Their Sculpture," on March 7 at the museum.

Diane Pelrine, curator of the arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas at the museum, wrote the brochure. Excerpts appear below.

Limbs stretching like rubber and bending in unnatural directions, faces with wild toothy grins, tongues extending to the knees, and pointed cat ears—images such as these, which seem surreal to Westerners, bring together the imagination of Malaysia’s Orang Asli carvers and the world of their traditional religious spirits. Created by people often called the least “advanced” among the Malaysian population and originally conceived as a way to supplement income in an increasingly cash economy, the carved wooden sculptures also offer their makers a path into mainstream Malaysian life.

These contemporary wood sculptures, primarily depicting spirits associated with sickness and other misfortunes, are carved by members of the Jah Het and Mah Meri groups of the Orang Asli (“original people”), whose populations are approximately 2,300 and from 1,300 to 2,600, respectively. They are traditionally farmers, living in the forest areas of Pahang and Selangor states in Peninsular Malaysia. Though some have converted to Islam—Malaysia’s dominant religion—a common belief of traditional Orang Asli religion is in the power of a variety of spirits to affect the course of human life. These spirits may be associated with any facet of the cosmos, including natural phenomena, such as lightening; geographic features, such as mountains and rivers; flora and fauna; and human diseases. The molar toothache spirit, for example, is said to sit on the top of a house door, waiting for unwary people with holes in their teeth who stand too close by. The Moyang Amai depicted on the cover of the newsletter is a spirit that prevents sickness and protects the area around a village.

Each sculpture is given the name of a particular Bès (“spirit”) or moyang (“ancestor”) and depicts features that are related to that spirit. For example, a large weighty-looking object sits on the head of an image, an apt reminder that the spirit afflicts people by making their heads feel very heavy. Most carvers choose traditional Bès or moyang iconography, but because only certain features are prescribed for each spirit, there is wide latitude for individual carvers to show their own creativity.

The Orang Asli began commercial carving in the 1950s when a government official proposed that they increase their sources of income by making larger, more finished versions of the figures used in traditional curing rituals. Sculptures are carved both for wholesale to dealers and for individual sales to other Malaysians and foreigners. There is a large market among foreigners, both expatriates living in Malaysia and tourists on vacation. Patrons

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SPEA Professor Receives Prestigious Entrepreneurship Award

The prestigious International Award of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research has been awarded for 2001 to David B. Audretsch, Ameritech Chair of Economic Development and director of the Institute for Development Strategies at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and his collaborator, Zoltan J. Acs, professor of entrepreneurship in the Merrick School of Business at the University of Baltimore. The award consists of the statuette “The Hand of God,” created by sculptor Carl Milles, and the sum of $50,000.

The award was created six years ago by the Swedish Board for Industrial and Technical Development (NUTEK), in collaboration with Telia AB and the Swedish Foundation for Small Business Research (FSF). It is presented annually to a person who has made a scientific contribution to theory-building concerning at least one of the following areas: entrepreneurship and small business development; the role and importance of new firm formation; or the role of small business research in economic development.

Audretsch and Acs, together as a research team and each in his own right, are cited for their significant contributions to entrepreneurship and small business research concerning the role of small firms in the economy and in innovative activity. They are also recognized for their work in organizing prestigious conferences and editing the pioneering journal Small Business Economics: An International Journal, a publication that has contributed significantly to advancing the development of knowledge in this field within the last decade.

Audretsch’s research has been published in more than 100 scholarly articles and 25 books. He is author of Innovation and Industry Evolution (MIT Press, 1995) and co-author with Acs of Innovation and Small Firms (MIT Press, 1990). Before joining the IU faculty in 1998, Audretsch was at the government-funded Science Centre for Social Science Research in Berlin, Germany, from 1984 to 1997, where he served as acting director and research professor.

Audretsch will receive the award in a ceremony on May 3 in Sweden, after which he will make a 10-day speaking tour of the country.

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include fellow Malaysians, but some Muslims do not consider depictions of spirits appropriate, and Islam may have at least an indirect effect on some carvers. However, Orang Asli sculpture has been exhibited in Malaysia since 1958, and in 1997, a donor presented more than 400 sculptures collected over a 40-year period to the Malaysian government for the national museum.

The story of Orang Asli sculpture is by no means unique. Indeed, many indigenous peoples in other parts of Asia and the South Pacific, the Americas, and Africa have found that the creation of art specifically for an outside market is one way, at least in some measure, to keep alive aspects of traditional culture while living in the modern world.