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Distinguished African Art Scholar to Speak

SALEM, ORE—Pamela McClusky, one of the foremost African art historians in the United States, will deliver an illustrated slide on Yoruba art and thought on Thursday, January 31 beginning at 7 p.m. in the Paulus Lecture Hall in the Willamette University College of Law. Admission to her lecture is complimentary.

According to McClusky, Yoruba art is filled with ashe, or “the power to make things happen.” In performances, masqueraders called *Egungun* or “beings from beyond” enact movements that no one can explain. *Gelede* masks are worn to enact parodies of different personalities. In sculpture, the Yoruba depict a wide array of deities that are akin to those of the ancient Greeks.

In McClusky’s lecture, you’ll meet *Shango*, a tempestuous god who commands thunder and lightning to strike at deceitful people. You’ll see how small twin figures called *Ibeji* help the families who own them learn to cope with the loss of a sibling by caring for the twin sculptures. Finally, you’ll discover how Yoruba aesthetics and ritual still thrive in Western Nigeria as well as Brazil, the Caribbean, London, and even New York.

After spending her teenage years in Liberia, Pamela McClusky returned to the United States and began looking for places that recognized African art. She attended Mills College in California and the University of Washington in Seattle. While a graduate student at the University of Washington, she discovered African art in the basement of the Seattle Art Museum and convinced the director to place the African collection on view. In 1980, she helped establish the Department of African and Oceanic Art at the Seattle Art Museum and has served as its curator since 1996.

Over the years, McClusky has published extensively in the field of African art and has organized numerous exhibitions dealing with the topic. A national traveling exhibition, *Art from Africa: Long Steps Never Broke a Back*, took the Seattle Art Museum’s collection around the United States for three years. Most recently, she established a series of permanent galleries to house their splendid collection of African art, created a permanent gallery devoted to Australian Aboriginal art, and developed a new gallery space devoted to textile arts.

Pamela McClusky’s lecture is presented in conjunction with ***Yoruba Sculpture: Selections from the Mary Johnston Collection***, which continues through March 16, 2008 at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art. Included in the exhibition are masks worn in various festivals and rituals, cult figures made of bronze and wood, drums used in different ceremonies, and an elaborately carved 8’ tall house post. In addition, the exhibition includes a king’s beaded crown and an *Egungun* masquerade costume.

Yoruba Sculpture: Selections from the Mary Johnston Collection has been supported in part by grants from the City of Salem's Transient Occupancy Tax funds and the Oregon Arts Commission.

The Hallie Ford Museum of Art is located at 700 State Street (corner of State and Cottage Streets) in downtown Salem near the campus of Willamette University. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. The galleries are closed Monday. Admission is \$3 for adults and \$2 for seniors and students. Children under 12 are free, and Tuesday is a free day. For more information, please call 503/370-6855.