



One of a kind collection

North Dakota Museum of Art debuts new African art exhibit

Story and photos | Wade Rupard

The North Dakota Museum of Art unveiled its newest exhibit Sunday, one of the most culturally significant works of African art, said the museum's director, Laurel Reuter.

The collection is the most valuable ever to be acquired by the museum, estimated to be worth more than \$712,000.

"This is terrific for the state of North Dakota," Reuter said. "This is one of the most important African art collections ever acquired."

The exhibit will be on display for the next two months. Admission to view the exhibition is free, and it is open to the public. The museum is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays and from 1 to 5 p.m. on weekends.

Reuter said the museum was able to acquire the works through "friends of friends" over the course of several years.

In December 2012, collector Thomas McNemar, who spent 20 years in West Africa amassing an extensive collection of African art, donated 30 earthenware pots and a few clay and wood sculptures to the museum.

The following December, another gift from McNemar was given to the museum, including more than 120 sculptures, including carved storage boxes, chief's chairs, lidded wooden bowls and many masks.

McNemar traveled throughout Africa acquiring these items, beginning with his first expedition to the continent in 1966.

When McNemar returned state-side, he opened a gallery in New York, then San Francisco, before settling in his hometown of Lexington, Va.

McNemar, a dealer whose clients included major European and American art museums, soon struck up a friendship with Barton Benes and Reuter.

Over the years, the three of them became friends, and both soon donated items to the museum. Benes' own collection, including over 50 African masks, now reside on the top floor of the museum in Barton's Place, a recreation of his art-filled New York apartment.

Benes had traded his own art for McNemar's African art, so it was only fitting that it all came back together to North Dakota, Reuter said.

Reuter said the two of them were interested in bringing their collections to a place such as North Dakota because people here are not as familiar with African culture.

"He wanted people to see it and respect it for what it was," Reuter said. "He would say, 'If I give my collection to the Smithsonian Museum, it will go forever into storage. If I give it to the North Dakota Museum of Art, people will see it.'"

This exhibition showcases more than 150 pieces, each with cultural significance to the African people, Reuter said. The museum's collection comes from 50 cultures found in 17 different west and central African countries.

"This art is art that a lot of peo-



The North Dakota Museum of Art debuted a new art exhibit Sunday. The exhibition, titled "An African Affair," is one of the most extensive collections of African art ever assembled, said Laurel Reuter, director of the museum.

ple around here aren't familiar with and don't know anything about" Reuter said. "So to have it here is incredible."

For centuries, African women had made earthenware pots from local clay for ordinary purposes such as storage pots for grain, water or cooking.

Collectors paid little attention to

African earthenware pots before the 1990s, when Douglas Dawson introduced them through his Chicago art gallery as coveted works of art. It's speculated that within a few generations, these sorts of pots will no longer be made.

This makes this exhibition among the best and most noteworthy ones to ever come into the mu-

seum's gallery, Reuter said.

"I'm so happy to have this here at the North Dakota Museum of Art," she said. "Hopefully people can come by and learn something new about a culture they might not be familiar with."

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Does Drake's surprise album foretell major changes in his future?

By Gerrick D. Kennedy
Los Angeles Times

While the West Coast had long been tucked into bed last Thursday, Drake surprised fans by quietly dropping an album. Without warning, a 17-song project titled "If You're Reading This It's Too Late" popped up on iTunes. Sound familiar?

There had long been rumors that the Canadian singer-rapper was planning on issuing a mixtape to tide fans over for his next album,

"Views From the 6." And speculation of an imminent release intensified earlier last week when he issued a stylish short film called "Jungle" (a song on the album bears the same title).

The release makes us wonder, however, is this his swan song to Cash Money?

A little history. For months, Drake's mentor Lil Wayne has been embroiled in a bitter dispute with Cash Money, the label that oversees the Young Money imprint which signed Drake along with fel-

low superstar Nicki Minaj.

Late last month, Wayne's beef with the label got serious and he hit the company with a lawsuit to the tune of \$51 million. With Wayne loudly vocalizing his desire to get out of Cash Money, one can only assume that the talents he signed and guided to superstardom would jump ship with him. Right? At least that's the speculation further fueled by this surprise release.

While Drake has continued to remain mum throughout

the ongoing drama, does this album serve as his answer?

Its title and release model are tough clues to ignore. Fans quickly started buzzing over the cover art. The title is crudely drawn in black ink on a white background. The font's similarity to Chick-fil-A's instantly spawned an Internet meme and the album's menacing tone is rumored to be aimed toward Cash Money head Bryan "Birdman" Williams.

And then there is the rollout. This isn't a free offering

gifted to fans on a whim, it's a full-fledged record on iTunes released under the Cash Money label. Is this release, his fourth, the last of a contractual obligation to Cash Money?

We will wait and see, but an early listen to the collection of tracks reveals that this is Drake at his finest. He dives between rapping and singing, injecting introspection, regret and braggadocio over long, woozy, atmospheric beats.

"If You're Reading This

It's Too Late" isn't much of a showcase of Drake's vulnerability. This is a colder Drake, and it's hard to blame him given all the turmoil on the home team and the so-called "stones" thrown at him over the past year, as he references on "You & The 6."

But as the Internet continues to chew over all the bars, samples, disses and hooks that Drake packed onto the album, we can't shake the feeling that we may have just witnessed his checkmate in a label war.