



IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

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Liz Lees and Bill Caskey's annual San Francisco Tribal & Textile Art Show unfailingly offers the public a kaleidoscopic slice in time of the diverse and vogueish market in the 'fine art of native cultures'.

THE NINETY-PLUS DEALERS from six continents filled the Festival Pavilion at Fort Mason, and lively public attendance through most of a rather cold and wet long weekend (9-12 February 2012), confirmed the 26th SF Tribal show as the most important, accessible and agreeable 'non-European' art event anywhere in the world.

My choice of details to illustrate this brief impression is heavily biased towards textiles and

rugs, but an increasing part of the art that catches my eye at these events comprises three-dimensional sculptural objects that are unknown to me and thus engage my curiosity more than all but the very best oriental rugs and ethnic textiles.

Take, for instance, the intriguing and very rare Congolese painted wickerwork dance rattle **8**, or the more than seventy shields in diverse materials – some ritual objects, others at least semi-functional – from Africa, Australia, Borneo, New Guinea and even China **2**, that I counted around the hall. Some dealers remarked that their preponderance is a new phenomenon – perhaps a subliminal expression of a desire for protection from the 'dangers' of the modern world.

The runaway success story at the show was, however, not the shields, but the special foyer exhibition 'Post Punk Pink', a hugely colourful and undeniably decorative vista of late 20th century Berber rag rugs **9**, arranged with great commercial nous by the Austrian dealer Gebhart Blazek. Love them or hate them – there are plenty in both camps – the *boucherouite* sold like hotcakes, finding almost thirty buyers.

In addition to the more or less traditional oriental rugs, bags, kilims and textiles shown and sold by Mehmet Çetinkaya, Ron Hort, John Collins, Hagop Manoyan **4**, **11**, Stella Krieger, the Aydin brothers **5**, Şeref Özen **6**, **13**, Casey Waller, Ulrike Montigel and others, there were less usual rugs too, notably Alan Marcuson and Diane Hall's

Art Deco raffia pile carpet **10**, knotted under Belgian colonial tutelage in Rwanda. M&H also presented other esoteric African and Asian woven material, including sculptural basketry, textiles and garments, as too did Clive Loveless, Cathy Cootner and Andrés Moraga **12**.

Iban Dayak *pua sungkit* from Borneo are rare, but there were three on show, an exceptional 'dancing ladies' cloth with Tom Murray **1**, and others with Mark Johnson and Vicki Shiba. South and Southeast Asian costume and cloth, Chinese minorities and Japanese textiles, some of great subtlety, were shown by John Ruddy, Rudolf Smend, Wen Hua Liu, Chinalai, John Gillow, Frank Wiggers, Joe and Katie Loux, Chris Selser, and a scattering of others.

The range of textile art encompassed bold Navajo blankets from the American Southwest with Brant Mackley, Vicki Shiba **14**, Gary Spratt **15**, and Chris Selser **16**, as well as fine pre-Columbian textiles with Leonard Kalina **3**, John Molloy and one or two more, though in this sometimes difficult area of the market the absence from this year's show of Steve and Gail Berger, as well as Gail Martin, was noticeable.

Bill Caskey and Liz Lees look after their exhibitors well: they provided an extra stand, gratis, to help Vichai Chinalai's fundraising for flood relief through the sale of the calligraphic paintings he had improvised in Thailand while waiting for the waters to subside.

