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Patrick Hunt: Ceremony is almost always invested with dignity where we think we can slow down time, and mark a moment as more important than another.

Nasser Rabbat: A ceremonial is always a spectacle and it's meant to be as such. And in this context, art is actually serving as the support of that spectacle.

When you go to a museum you are looking at objects that are totally detached from their context. You look at them as art, and you start seeing their formal quality, their artistic qualities.

Mary Nooter Roberts: They are products of aesthetic genius, but many of the objects were not necessarily made as art originally.

Nasser Rabbat: These objects were not produced to be put on a pedestal or to be put in a glass box.

Mary Nooter Roberts: In point of fact, most of these objects were made for a purpose.

Segment Title: Masks and Ritual

Patrick Hunt: Around the world, masks are worn in ceremony, in art, in drama, as well as carnival, as celebration. Masks make a profound statement of transformation.

Roy Hamilton: If you go into Balinese communities today, you'll see beautiful masks. The Barong is a spirit guardian of a Balinese village.

It takes the form of a mask and once every six months on the Balinese calendar, the community gathers and the Barong is taken out of its storage space. It's blessed. Mantras are said over it.

And people pay homage to it. The Barong dispenses its blessings for the community's well-being. It can chase away sickness. It can dispel evil forces. And it actually makes a progression through the whole community and it's honored every step of the way.

And then the highlight of the ritual happens that evening when the Barong is actually danced.

Dancer: Before the dance, I had said a prayer asking permission from the spirit of the Barong. If the Barong is willing to have me dance it, it will feel light.

Roy Hamilton: At the climax of the dance, a spiritual presence enters the dancer.

Dancer: At that moment, I felt the divine power enter me.

Roy Hamilton: That is the sign to the community that the Barong is present and will offer protection to the community in the months that come.

Mary Nooter Roberts: Once a person has entered the arena of the masquerade performance, they are no longer that individual. They become transformed. Rites of passage are moments of transition and transformation, where a person undergoes a change from one status or identity to another. And very often a work of art will facilitate that transformation.

So, for example, among Mende peoples of Sierra Leone in West Africa, there's an entire association dedicated to women's initiation rights, an association called Sande whose role is specifically to guard and transmit the knowledge pertaining to women's worlds. And at various points during these initiation rights, masquerades were staged that would announce the completion of certain stages of learning.

And what is so remarkable about Mende masks is that they are one of the very rare examples where masks are commissioned and danced, performed by women.

And you'll notice often that there are rings around the neck. The neck appears to have these tubular rings.

A woman with lines around her neck is considered to be extremely beautiful. That is very true among Mende, but there's also the suggestion that because the spirits reside within the deep, dark pools and lakes, that when a spirit emerges and pokes her head through the water, it creates concentric circles on the surface of the water. And these rings are a reflection of the emergence of the spirit.

One of the things that we've heard is that the Sande Association has played a critical role in healing and in helping young women who have endured some of the brutalities of the civil war to transcend those difficulties. And so it continues to update its purpose and play a role in people's lives today in Sierra Leone.

Segment Title: Ceremonial Arts of Power

Mary Nooter Roberts: There are all kinds of ceremonies and rituals and pomp and pageantry all over the world that you could look at as a mode of display. And in the realm of status and prestige that's very, very common.

Patrick Hunt: When a king wants to display power, there are many means at disposal. There is a famous portrait of Louis XIV by the court portraitist of the time, Hyacinthe Rigaud, where he shows Louis XIV in a majestic statement of power. You see the Sun King in this magnificent robe with the fleur-de-lis on it, and fur trim, and the king looks out slightly down his nose at the viewer. One of the most fascinating aspects of this portrait is where the king's hand rests on the pommel of a sword, it's *Joyeuse*, the sword of Charlemagne. This is the sword that is used in coronations of French kings. You could not be a king of France without this sword as part of that ceremony. So it was no accident that *Joyeuse*, the sword of Charlemagne, is in that picture, fastened to Louis XIV.

Nasser Rabbat: When you start looking at the objects that are displayed in ceremonials, everything is of the highest quality, of the most expensive material. And this applies across the board. There is no West and East in that.

One object is not a ceremonial object in its original form. It was most probably ceremonial in the sense it was a banquet object which is actually a huge metal bowl that was taken in 1249 from Egypt to France and it became the baptistery of all the French kings. And it went back to become this highly, highly, highly meaningful object, where all the kings of France were baptized until the French Revolution. And it's a copper basin that is carved with images of the sultan on his horse and all the emirs, all the princes around him in their ceremonial dresses.

The Mamluk period is quite an interesting period. Here we have, in Egypt and Syria, we have an empire that is based on a meritocracy among a group of ex-slaves. They created probably the best military empire of the time.

But they were socially unstable because this is a one-generation aristocracy. You always import slaves, you always train them, and Malmuk them and the next generation of the aristocracy is going to come out of these new trainees.

So it needed a lot of pageantry, a lot of ceremonials around it in order to constantly remind the people of its power, of its wealth, of its legitimacy. So they developed fabulous ceremonials.

Patrick Hunt: In the material and ceremonial arts of any culture you have to use art to maintain the status quo. Power has to be conveyed. Ceremonial art conveys that power.

Santhi Kacuri-Bauer: To really understand the art of the Mughals, you have to see it within the context of the ceremonies.

Red Fort was established in 1648, and its function was to serve as the capital for the Mughal Empire. The reason why Shah Jahan had it built was because the other two capitals were too small for the kind of ceremonies that he imagined happening.

These ceremonies were very essential because the Mughal Empire socially was so heterogeneous the nobility was from very different religious backgrounds. It was important for him to create a social order. And this was symbolically enacted on a daily basis during his *darbars*.

The daily ceremonies that took place at Red Fort were so important to the Mughal emperor. It consolidated his rule. It helped stabilize the society. It also had the added importance of having people perform the hierarchy. And once it was performed, it was also represented by court painters in the chronicles of the emperor.

And it just helped punctuate his power and importance, and the hierarchy that he ruled over.

Segment Title: Costume and Performance

Tavia Nyong'o: The relationship between ceremony and enactments of social power in contemporary society is an interesting one.

Mardi Gras is the most immediately identifiable annual ritual event in American public life. It's a version of carnival, which is celebrated throughout the world, of the pre-penitential festival, which is associated with the ritual calendar of the Catholic Church. And it has specific American characteristics.

Mardi Gras krewes, which echo social and racial hierarchies in the city, and the Mardi Gras Indians are two of the most recognizable faces of Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

Ceremonial art objects acquire their significance and value through their use during the course of the event that is occurring. You have the various gifts that are thrown from the floats—beads, doubloons, coconuts—these are avidly collected and pursued by revelers. And then more recently, the Mardi Gras Indian costumes are now collected and displayed in museums because they are themselves such extraordinary examples of ceremonial creativity, ritual and creativity.

New Orleans is part of the U.S. South, part of the Confederacy, and the dominance of white over black has been a really critical part of New Orleans's history. Mardi Gras really becomes a way of performing the multiple ethnic and cultural heritages of the city, of New Orleans, and also of staging some of the racial and class conflicts.

Judith Bettelheim: Defining Carnival depends on who you are, where you are, what historical period. So Carnival is an organized event that is public, that is performance-oriented, that includes incredible aesthetic innovation.

If we're looking at Carnival in the Caribbean, the first thing one does is look to the colonial heritage of the particular countries. And then you see historically what the population did in terms of street performance.

All over the Caribbean what you find are people who appropriate convenience in terms of how can we dress? How can we act? How can we get away with doing this under a slavery system? Under a dictatorship?

There is a fascinating character in Haiti named Chaloska, and it refers to an infamous general, Charles Oscar Etienne.

This person murdered a significant amount of political prisoners, and so in Carnival they develop a character that speaks to this event. But it also can speak to any similar kinds of events that have happened since 1915.

Masquerader: You are accused of telling the truth! You are charged with not giving us what little you own!

Judith Bettelheim: The young men playing this character can always say, "Oh, we weren't talking about anything that happened today or yesterday, we were just talking about an important event in Haitian history."

Why is Carnival important? It's because it's art by the people themselves, for the people themselves. We're seeing live art, performance art.

Tavia Nyong'o: Rituals are meant to establish the fact that you are being presented and interacting with an object, which has a kind of aura around it.

Burning Man is a contemporary, I would say, post-modern festival held annually in the Nevada desert. And its purpose is to create a kind of temporary autonomous zone in which artistic and creative expression is at a premium.

The Burning Man effigy, which is at the core of the iconography of the festival obviously bears a lot of resonance with

anyone's idea of what a kind of ritual or ceremonial art would be in society.

The principle behind gift-giving or an alternative economy is that we can kind of step out of a commodified culture in which we consume passively, rather than actively create, and discover the creative principle that has been allowed to lie dormant in most people in contemporary society.

It's a sort of a newly invented ritual. But all these are very self-conscious. And its purpose is not to recreate something, but to invent something within the present, to kind of propose an alternative to everyday reality.

The idea that everyone is a creator then shifts the relationship between the individual and the art object because your own body becomes the art object in terms of the ways in which people designed themselves, the fashion they wear. So this idea of breaking down the border between art and life is very important.

Andrew Bolton: The idea of the dressed body as a performance is something which is about artistry. It becomes a performance, I think, the dressed body more than anything else.

When you think about the eighteenth century in particular, when women were dressed in very wide dresses, as a, there's an understructure called a pannier, which widened one's hips. And the idea of moving a dressed body through a very densely decorated interior was really about sociability, it's about aristocratic sociability.

A lot of those pieces were really ceremonial. They were highly formal clothing. They were worn in specific contexts, which often meant that one would have to pass through a doorway sideways. We have one in the museum, which almost measures seven feet in width. And yes, you're right, it's not practical. It's called elbow panniers because you could quite literally rest your elbows on them. So when it comes to formal and ceremonial clothing, it's much more about spectacle and ceremony. So practicality is less a function of clothing than it is about showing off one's wealth, showing off one's position.

Anne D'Alleva: We need to look at the performative context. The way art performs and is performed during rituals for birth, rituals for death, during political rituals and a variety of human contexts, and so that it isn't divorced from our actions, whether those are ritual actions or daily actions.

So to look at a feather headdress from Hawaii, one of the things we want to think about is not just that headdress in a museum context, where we might look at the form and we might look at the colors and we might look at the symbolism. But to think about that as an object that is worn, an artwork that is worn, that moves in space, that is worn during warfare, that is worn during religious ceremonies and how those different performative contexts where it's worn and it acts and it engages really changes how we understand it, instead of in the context of the static museum display.

Tavia Nyong'o: The museum itself is a context and has a pedagogy and there are purposes to which objects are put. And so an object that has a ceremonial purpose or value in one context, say its original context, doesn't lose its context in the museum setting; it's given a new one. And that new context is often a kind of educational or pedagogic purpose.

Segment Title: Ceremony and the Museum

CHiXapkaid (Michael Pavel): I'm CHiXapkaid, Dr. Michael Pavel, from Skokomish Indian Reservation. Currently an associate professor at Washington State University, but also a Traditional Bearer on the Skokomish Reservation in the traditional society.

The idea of pulling together this Soul Recovery exhibit is years in the making. Many communities throughout the native lands are suffering at the hands of colonization and oppression. And that deep-seated sadness has evolved into depression, so that the whole family kinship and network has been somewhat disrupted. This ceremony, in fact, was about providing aid to a particular individual who may have lost their soul, but it was also about gathering the community to work in one mind, one heart, one spirit, for the purpose of something good, something that we could see that would contribute to the worth of living.

Kay-UAmihs (Winona Plant): I've been working with the ceremonies all my life. I can remember being five and traveling in secret and being told, "Don't talk about what happened."

And I can remember when we could actually participate in our ceremonies openly, and what a rejoice that was for the families not to be in hiding. I'm thankful that my children don't have to do that.

Sm3tcoom (Delbert Miller): We are making a place of teaching, a place of training. We're making storyboards that are describing the entire Soul Recovery ceremony.

We will use this as a type of family tree or genealogy. And so we're going to use these as a training ground for our children. And the people that are deciding to come back into our culture.

CHiXapkaid (Michael Pavel): There's something about giving back that gives each of us a sense of worth. It means that we value life so much that we're willing to do whatever is necessary to make sure other people enjoy it, too.

All the spirit boards that we see being brought in are individualistic. They have their own identity. They represent the spiritual guardian power of each Indian doctor, and they're important for each step that a person has to make from here in the land of the living to the first land of the dead.

The other items are particularly meaningful, too. As we begin to see the headbands that are around each of the carved figures, those were actually worn by the Indian doctors. The basket that has imitation huckleberries represents the enchanted huckleberry. The little doll that represents a soul container, actually what the soul was put in, when they traveled back from the first land of the dead to this corporate realm—all these items work together to create the ceremony.

As these things are being placed. They have a particular order, which means they have a particular purpose. As you see these items that were just days before art pieces now becoming living art pieces, becoming sacred art pieces, becoming part of a ceremony, you begin to understand this incredible link between the artistic endeavor, the intellectual endeavor, and the spiritual endeavor.

You have to have sadness. That's part of the range of emotion. But inter-generational sadness? No. No, that has to stop. This ceremony is meant for that reason—to stop that sadness. To stop the time when people are leaving this world before their time. To bring forth the chance where people wake up and they give into their promise. We are not just talking about the recovery of the soul of an individual, but it's about the soul and the salvation of our society.

Nasser Rabbat: Ceremony is actually the way a society would express its highest organizational aspiration and art comes in as, if you want, the envelope of that, and perhaps also the carrier of specific meanings within this larger context.

Tavia Nyong'o: I think that for the contemporary museum-going, even though they've seen, say, a particular famous work of art many many times in reproduction, that the society, the spectacle, and media which on the one hand distances us from the original piece of art, also brings us closer because it provokes that kind of desire and curiosity to make the pilgrimage to see the actual object itself.

Mary Nooter Roberts: These objects were meant to elicit life. Whether they were of ceremony or ritual or just of daily life, they were part of life. They allow us to reflect on humanity and on shared human concerns, but on the very different ways that so many different peoples of the world have found solutions to the same kinds of problems.

Patrick Hunt: What we human beings do with ceremony is we intensify the moment in which we want to convey our most important social reinforced values. So that ceremony is a vehicle for what we think is important.

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