

PRIMITIVE PIECES

The Newsletter of The Museum of Primitive Art and Culture

1058 Kingstown Road, Room 5
Peace Dale, R.I. 02879 ♦ (401) 783-5711
www.primitiveartmuseum.org

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Spring 2013

Abraham Lincoln in Film

Producer and director Steven Spielberg's current cinematic reconstruction of Lincoln's efforts toward passage of the 13th Amendment, the amendment that would abolish slavery, features Daniel Day-Lewis's Oscar-winning performance as the sixteenth president. The movie's exploration of the epic moral questions surrounding slavery is appropriate at a time in history when Americans have just elected their first African-American president.



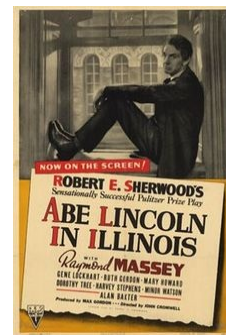
Many actors and directors have attempted to portray Abraham Lincoln, and the picture that emerges is always colored by the time in which it is made.

Walter Houston starred in D.W. Griffith's 'Abraham Lincoln,' a 1930 film that included both realistic depictions of Lincoln's depression and entirely fictionalized recreations of historical events (the Civil War breaks out when the North attacks Fort Sumter; Lincoln delivers a speech at Ford's Theater that includes elements of the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address moments before being shot).

'Young Mr. Lincoln,' released in 1939, was a partially-fictionalized biography directed by John Ford that starred Henry Fonda. The dramatic highlight of the story was Lincoln's successful defense of two brothers accused of murder

by discrediting the testimony of the prosecution's star witness.

In 1940's 'Abe Lincoln in Illinois,' Canadian Raymond Massey reviving his role as Lincoln in the original Broadway production. The future president is depicted as a hayseed who lacks ambition, while Mary Todd is portrayed as a woman determined to push him toward his rightful place in history. In reality, Lincoln's ambition "was a little engine that knew no rest," his law partner William



Herndon once said. The film, which lost \$740,000, was one of the biggest financial disasters in the history of RKO Radio Pictures. *continued on page 2*

Our Spring Lecture Series Begins on Thursday, April 11

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Thursday, April 25

The Art of the Tattoo

Human beings have marked their bodies with tattoos for thousands of years. The people who wore these permanent skin markings believed they imparted status, provided protection, broadcast declarations of love, or illustrated social status. The 5,200-year-old "Iceman" discovered in the mountains on the Italian-Austrian border in 1991 had tattoos, and tattoos have been found on female Egyptian mummies dating to 2,000 B.C. Some scientists believe those tattoos served as amulets to protect the wearer during pregnancy and childbirth.

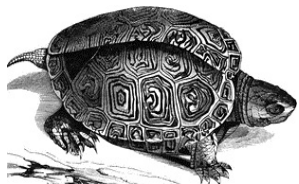
Today, tattoos are quickly gaining popularity as a form of personal adornment that imparts a message. On Thursday, April 25 at 7:00 p.m. in the Museum Gallery, tattoo artist George Dietz of Richmond Street Tattoo in Providence will discuss the history of tattoos, how to choose a tattoos, tattoo etiquette, and state law requirements concerning training and hygiene, as well as how tattoos are removed.



The woman on this bowl (ca. 1300 B.C.) has a tattoo on her thigh.

Thursday, May 9

Does a Turtle Carry the Earth?



Many Native American peoples have stories of creation that explain how they came to be and to live in their homelands. In the northeastern United States, many tribes share the legend that the world was created on the back of a giant sea turtle.

On Thursday, May 9, at 7:00 p.m., Domenic Parisella, of Pure Paradise Pets in Johnston, will visit the Museum Gallery with some tortoises, turtles, and empty shells. (Ever seen the inside of a turtle shell?) Come join us and learn some things you didn't know about turtles.

Abraham Lincoln in Film

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What cultural trends and historical events shaped these earlier films? What can we learn about history, about the United States, and about ourselves by examining these portrayals?

On Thursday, April 11 at 7:00 p.m. in the Museum Gallery, retired R.I. Supreme Court Justice Frank J. Williams will explore the current Lincoln phenomenon and some past depictions of Lincoln. Judge Williams, co-founder of the Lincoln Forum and a past president of the Abraham Lincoln Association, will be joined by Thom Bassett, a lecturer in Bryant University's Department of English and Cultural Studies and a regular contributor to the *New York Times* 'Disunion' series on the Civil War. The presentation will include clips and trailers from earlier films.

'Lincoln Shawls' on exhibit

During the mid-1800s, the Peace Dale Manufacturing Co., produced thousands of shawls woven from the wool of sheep raised in Narragansett. The shawls, which were fringed 60-inch squares, were extensively marketed up and down the eastern seaboard.

The shawls were known as 'Lincoln Shawls' because Rowland Hazard, the mill's president, is believed to have given one to President Lincoln after learning that he often carried or wore a shawl.

The three Lincoln Shawls in the museum's collection were first displayed in 2005. We welcome the opportunity to exhibit them again in connection with Judge William's presentation.

Each program begins at 7:00 p.m. in the Museum Gallery on the second floor of the Peace Dale Office Building, 1058 Kingstown Road, across from the Peace Dale Library. Refreshments will be served. Admission is free for Museum members; a donation by non-members is appreciated.



The Museum of Primitive Art and Culture

1058 Kingstown Road, Room 5 • Peace Dale, Rhode Island 02879

(401) 783-5711 • www.primitiveartmuseum.org

Beth Hogan, Museum Administrator

Louise Weaver, Administrative Assistant

Mary Brown, Educator

The Museum Gallery is open Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and by appointment.

From the Curator's Desk

By Sarah Peabody Turnbaugh

Have you looked at your horoscope recently? No? Then, maybe you have had your palm read. Or



perhaps you have deciphered your tea leaves, or pondered the prophesy pulled from a Chinese fortune

cookie. Maybe you have unearthed a long-forgotten old Ouija board from its storage spot in the back of a cupboard.

It seems everyone is curious about the future. The ancient Greeks consulted their oracle at Delphi, and early Germanic people had their runes. The Yoruba people of western Africa have practiced divination (ifa) using a carved wooden tray to predict or prevent illness or bad luck.

The carvings on this Yoruba divination tray include the face of Eshu, the Yoruba trickster deity, who carried messages back and forth

between living people and their ancestors and the spirit world.

To use the tray, a diviner applies white chalk to its surface before tossing palm nuts onto it. Then, the marks that the palm nuts make on the tray's surface are interpreted. Certain patterns indicate which chants should be recited to heal or ward off misfortune.

So, if you cannot locate that old deck of tarot cards, or someone proficient in reading them, try a visit to our gallery. Here, you can see a Yoruba divination tray and other African objects that might offer insights.

The Nine Rites of the Munay-ki

On six consecutive Tuesday evenings this spring, the museum will offer courses in the Nine Rites of the Munay-ki, a series of ceremonies derived from traditional Incan spiritual practices that are intended to foster spiritual development and enlightenment.

In the classes, students learn the stories and symbolism of the rites, how they are celebrated, and how to prepare to receive the rites.

The classes will take place from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The first session is on April 2, 9, and 16. The second session is April 23 and 30 and May 7. The rites are given on May 14 and 21. The cost is \$120 per session.



Karen Brusciní, R.N., a Certified Healing Touch Practitioner, Integrated Energy Therapy® master instructor and medical and spiritual intuitive, will be the instructor. Visit her website, www.HandsofWisdom.webs.com to learn more.

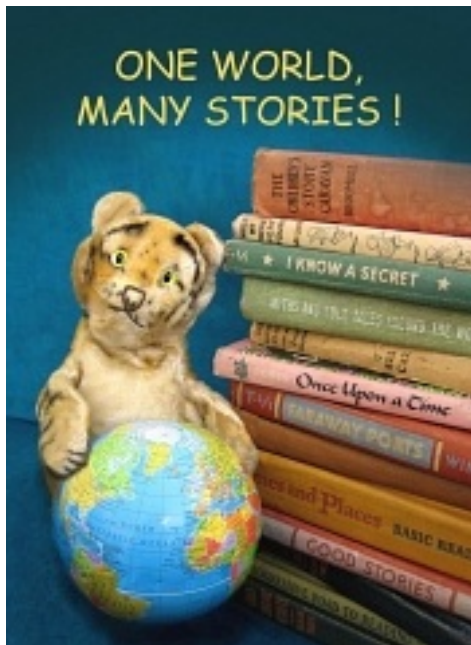
These classes are an experiential way to step back in time by participating in an ancient ceremony. Come join us and learn how to heal and age differently and step into infinity as the ancient medicine men and women have been doing since the beginning of time.

Please call museum administrator Beth Hogan at 932-4272 to register or for more information.

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Return Service Requested



Take a Trip Around the World with Sparky's Puppets!

Wednesday, April 17 at 10:30 a.m.
in the Museum Gallery

Take a trip around the world with funny folktales about clever animals and magical happenings. Meet a family of mice in Japan. Laugh at the antics of Anansi the Spider, a trickster from West Africa. And watch a pesky goblin try to outwit a hard-working farmer in a European tale called "Tops and Bottoms." Sparky's Puppets dramatize favorite children's stories with colorful hand puppets, lively humor, and plenty of audience participation.

Admission is free . . . Donations are welcome.