

PRESS RELEASE
Tuesday, February 13, 2024

RARE SINGLE COLLECTOR NORTHWEST COAST EXHIBITION
February 17 through March 9, 2024
Location: Uno Langmann Limited, 2117 Granville Street, Vancouver

Uno Langmann Limited is excited to announce a rare exhibition highlighting the Northwest Coast collection of entrepreneur and author Phil Nuytten (1941-2023). Carefully assembled over an entire lifetime starting at the age of 11, it is rare to find a private collection of such significance and quality, with works spanning almost two centuries and including a diverse range of artists. Many works were purchased directly from the artists and the collection has never before been exhibited or seen publicly as a whole.

The exhibition is split between a selling exhibition and works destined for two British Columbia institutions, providing a rare opportunity to see the collection in its entirety. For sale are exceptional examples including early works, as well as modern artists including Robert Davidson, Beau Dick, Ellen Neel, Bill Holm, John Livingston, Bill Reid, Doug Cranmer, Don Smith (Lelooska), Joe and Willie Seaweed, Dorothy Grant, Henry Hunt. The works intended for institutions include an impressive and rare collection of works by Charlie James, Mungo Martin, and Ellen Neel that Phil Nuytten assembled throughout his career. The exhibition and sale opens Saturday, February 17 at 10 am, with a reception from 2 to 4 pm. The collection will be posted for viewing online on Friday, February 16.

Often referred to as a “Renaissance Man”, Phil Nuytten was a legend and a pioneer in many fields – underwater explorer and sub-sea engineer, inventor, tech manufacturer, businessman, songwriter, carver, author, native advocate, and avid collector. Phil began diving at the age of 11 and was a passionate activist for ocean health, dedicating his career to deep ocean work and exploration, and specifically to ensuring that divers have full access to continental shelf depths without the hazards of decompression. He is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of the modern commercial diving industry and a significant force in the creation of new subsea technology. He received honorary doctorates from Queens University, Vancouver Island University and Simon Fraser University; received the Order of British Columbia; and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Growing up in Vancouver’s West side, Phil developed an interest in Northwest Coast art from studying the totem poles in Stanley Park and visiting the Vancouver Museum. At the age of 11 he learned of his Aboriginal heritage on his father’s side, which fueled his interest in studying and learning the fundamentals of Northwest Coast carving. He contacted noted Kwakwaka’wakw carver Ellen Neel, who agreed to give Phil lessons alongside her own children. He subsequently met other artists such Mungo Martin and Amos Dawson, who would have a profound influence on his life. Phil was dedicated to the preservation of Northwest Coast culture, and produced replicas of many early pieces, often working from early drawings and carvings. He was formally adopted by the Dawson family, who were Mamalilikulla from Village Island, and was given his first name, Tlax’wsam (pronounced “Tlock-sum”), meaning red snapper. In 1982 he published the seminal book on carvers Charlie James, Mungo Martin and Ellen Neel titled The Totem Carvers. Phil was a talented artist in many media including drawing and painting, wood carving, and engraving, and he continued to work, produce and collect until his death at the age of 81.



Phil's collecting is best summed up in his own words:

My interest in art from the Northwest Coast began in my teenage years when I was fortunate enough to apprentice with a master carver. I spent several summers in British Columbia working with Ellen Neel and sometimes with her uncle Mungo Martin. I wanted to be a master carver – a totem pole carver. Life, however led me in other directions. Nevertheless, I never lost my interest in native culture, its objects, and its artifacts.

The types of things that I collect are many and varied, mostly the things I like the look and feel of. I do a lot of this kind of artwork myself. As a consequence, I have a foot in both worlds – the world of the artist and the world of the collector. The pieces are most wonderful to look at, they also inspire me to find out more about the technique. How were they made? How can I first recreate them as studies and then create my own work based on them?

I have been collecting native art since I was about 11 or 12 years old. Many of the items I collect are made by the people whose lives I have studied and written about in periodicals. If an artifact needs to be in my collection, it will tell me so. I can almost hear it calling.

I believe some of the Northwest Coast pieces I have collected are very important to scholars because they are unique. They are works that were produced either earlier in the career of a certain carver or for a particular, rather obscure ceremony. By bringing them together it is possible to see how an artist's work has progressed over the years.

Excerpt from an interview, April 2004 - Source: Vancouver Art Gallery

The exhibition will be posted online on Friday, February 16.

Sales begin Saturday, February 17th at 10am, with an opening reception from 2pm to 4pm.

Location: Uno Langmann Gallery located at 2117 Granville Street, the first building on the South end of the Granville Street Bridge on the West side. Parking is available directly outside the gallery on Granville Street and around the corner on West 6th Avenue.

Inquiries welcome, please contact Jeanette Langmann at jeanette@langmann.com or 604-736-8825.

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