



ancestors

Art and the Afterlife



Ancestors at LACMA's Community Partner Museums



ancestors

Art and the Afterlife



EVERYONE HAS ANCESTORS, BUT CULTURES AROUND THE WORLD interact with their ancestors in many different ways. Visit some of our partner museums throughout Los Angeles and learn about the ways that different peoples honor their ancestors.

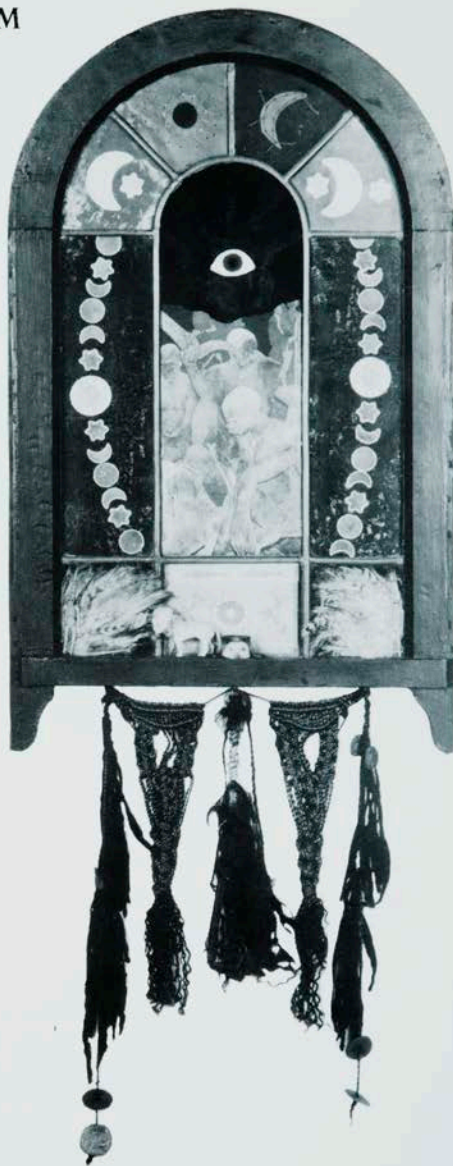
CALIFORNIA AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSEUM
600 State Drive, Exposition Park
Los Angeles, California 90037
213-744-7432
www.caam.ca.gov/index.html

CAN YOU FIND THE NINE “MOJO SECRETS”
represented in this assemblage?

- The Eye of God
- The state of limbo,
before birth and after death
- The remains of life
- The mysticism of the African lion
- The moon’s magical phases
- Native American sacred objects
- The Protective Hand
- A Gelede society mask
- The rites of passage

Each of these nine secrets means something special to the artist. She has combined the power of cultural objects, astrological signs, and African and voodoo rituals in this work of art. This assemblage by African-American artist Betye Saar is on display at the California African-American Museum.

Nine Mojo Secrets
Made by Betye Saar in 1971
Made of fiber, beads, and seeds
CAAM Foundation





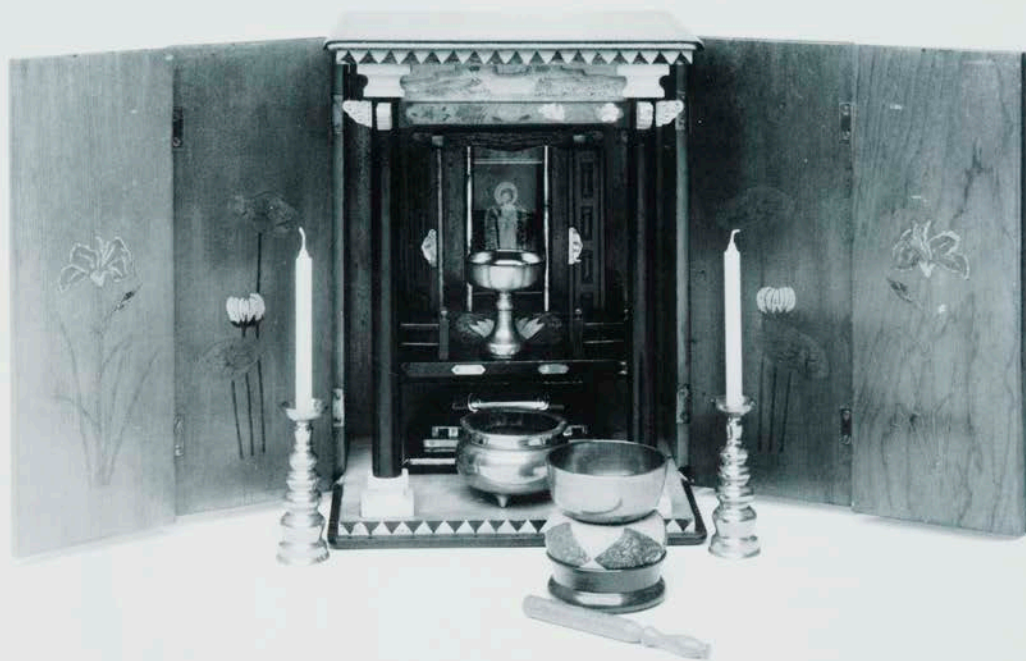
JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM

369 East First Street

Los Angeles, California 90012

213-625-0414

www.lausd.k12.ca.us/janm




Ancestral Altar (called a Butsudan)

Made by Henry Keiji Yoshida-Taniguchi in Gila River, Arizona, about 1944

Made of wood, tin, paint, and varnish

Gift of the family of Henry Keiji Yoshida-Taniguchi,

93.178.3; photograph by Norman H. Sugimoto



JAPANESE IMMIGRANTS ARRIVED IN the United States with a long, rich history. Parents passed on centuries-old cultural traditions and customs to their children and grandchildren.

Japanese-American families still create an ancestral altar, called a butsudans in their homes. The butsudans is a place where family members pay their respects to their ancestors. A photo of the deceased person, or a strip of paper with his or her name written on it, is commonly

found on the altar, along with the person's favorite foods. The family burns incense while offering prayers to the ancestor, requesting comfort or advice during difficult times.

During World War II, interned Japanese Americans fashioned butsudans out of discarded cardboard boxes, tin cans, and other scrap material found in the concentration camps. Henry Keiji Yoshida-Taniguchi created this altar while interned at the Gila River camp in Arizona.

PLAZA DE LA RAZA
3540 North Mission Road
Los Angeles, California 90031
213-223-2475
www.plazaraza.org



Altar para la Virgen de Guadalupe

Made by Frank Romero with Michael Flechtner, Olga Ponce Furginson,
Margaret García, Gilbert (Magú) Luján, Alberto Oropeza, Nancy Romero,
Teddy Sandoval, and Howard Swerdloff in Los Angeles in 1991. Mixed media
Plaza de la Raza Folk Art Collection



ALTARS ARE THE FOCAL POINT OF religious worship in many cultures and are usually found in public places, such as churches or chapels. Private altars, using images of saints and votive candles, are often created in Latino homes, forming a symbolic sacred space. These altars are commonly placed atop bedroom dressers.

In homage to Mexico's patron saint, the Virgin of Guadalupe, Frank Romero, with eight other

Los Angeles-based artists, created this public altar. The design includes Mexican craft traditions, such as papel picado (delicate paper cut-outs), painted tin figures, sculptural elements in wood and paper, artist totems, flowers, candles, photographs, and food offerings. This altar is usually on display at Plaza de la Raza during Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebrations, which are held between October 31 and November 2.

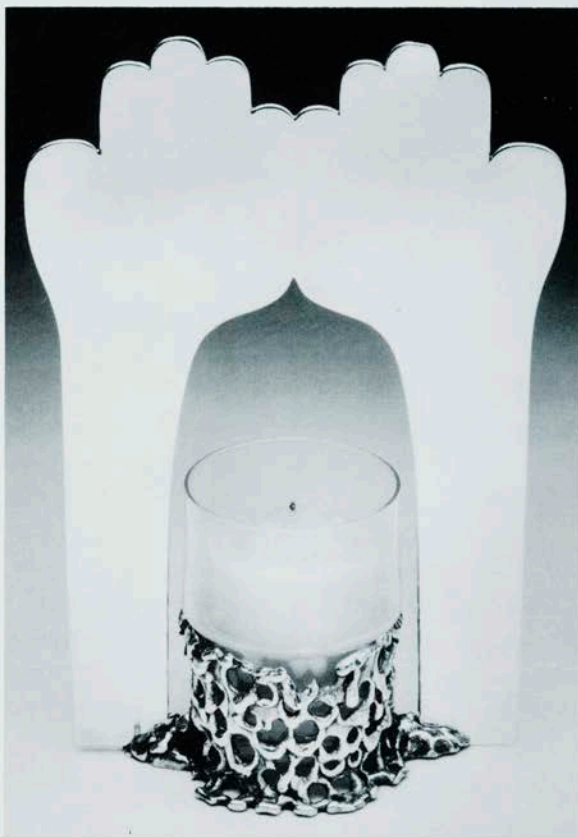
SKIRBALL CULTURAL CENTER
2701 North Sepulveda Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90049
310-440-4500
www.skirball.com

IN JEWISH CULTURE, THE MEMORIAL lamp is lit when a loved one dies and on the anniversary of his or her passing. Special prayers of remembrance are said, and the candle is allowed to burn from the eve of the anniversary to sunset of the following day.

Artists like Moshe Zabari create beautiful works of art that honor the memory of the departed. The Israeli-born Zabari took inspiration for the lamp's "praying hands" design from an ancient Canaanite stela discovered at the excavations of Hazor.

Memorial Lamp

Made by Moshe Zabari in New York in 1974
Made of hammered and welded silver and glass
Gift of Pnina and Moshe Zabari, in memory of
Amikam Dvir, Yigal Japko, and Ya'acov Kamersky,
who fell in the Yom Kippur War, October 1973,
HUCSM 64.2a/b; photograph by Marvin Rand



SOUTHWEST MUSEUM
234 Museum Drive
Los Angeles, California 90065
213-221-2164
www.southwestmuseum.org

IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, NATIVE American families are represented by heraldic crests, which are made up of images of animals and mythic figures.

Can you find the animals?
At the top of the pole is Kulus, a young thunderbird, who holds Bear between folded wings. Below Bear is the mythical sea monster, Yagis. The bottom form is Killer Whale, who is diving with a seal in his mouth. The designs are carved according to unique traditions developed over centuries.

The heraldic crest symbols on this pole belong to the Hunt family of Fort Rupert, British Columbia. The pole was carved in 1985 in honor of the artist's father, Dr. Henry Hunt, who was the revered chief of the Kwa-Gulth peoples of the Pacific Northwest.



Memorial Totem Pole (detail)
Designed by Richard Hunt (Kwa-Gulth/Kwakiutl)
and carved by Richard Hunt and Tim Paul
(Nuu-chan-Nulth/West Coast) in 1985
Made of wood
Southwest Museum; photograph by Topi J. Arvi

Visit the Southwest Museum's location
on the ground floor of LACMA West.

PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM
46 North Los Robles Avenue
Pasadena, California 91101
626-449-2742
www.intranet.csupomona.edu/~ige/pamhp2.html

THE CHINESE AND OTHER EAST Asian peoples share the philosophy of Confucianism, which holds the family in special importance. In Confucianism, concern for and loyalty to one's family extends beyond the present, reaching back for generations.

The Chinese generally believe that the ancestor's needs in the afterlife are similar to the needs of the living. Tomb guardians, known as lokapala, offered protection against harm in the afterlife and were buried with the deceased. The guardian figures are typically shown with fierce facial features standing on top of animals or demons. At the Pacific Asia Museum, you can see such a tomb guardian, a figure of a man standing on an ox. The figure's rich amber and green colors are derived from iron and copper oxides.

THE LATINO MUSEUM OF HISTORY, ART, AND CULTURE
112 South Main Street
Los Angeles, California 90012
213-626-7600
www.infolatino.com

THE LATINO MUSEUM PRESENTS exhibitions and programs that celebrate the artistic contributions of Latinos in the United States, the Americas, and internationally. Please call for further information.





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Ancestors: Art and the Afterlife, Experimental Gallery, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, on view through June 1999.

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