

Friday Fish Wrap for September 18-19th.

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Friday Fish Wrap: Sept 19-20

There's a wide variety of events at our local museums – from East to West, traditional arts, cartoon arts, photography from the Middle East and avanteguard work at the Berkeley Art Museum.

The Art of the Samurai at the Asian will be closing on September 20th. The exhibit "inspired" a parody website with a particular political ax to grind. While nastily clever, the parody website ignored the realities of museum funding, much less relationships with donors and a host of related issues in favor of promoting their point of view.

The Asian was open minded enough to raise the issue on their blog which inspired a wide variety of responses. Kudos to the Asian for allowing this kind of open, uncensored discussion on their website! What I found most amusing is that a number of the comments decrying the military ethic of the samurai and Japanese militarism in the earlier part of the 20th century were made by the same bloggers who were most fascinated by the swords and armor.

<http://www.asianart.org/blog/index.php/2009/08/27/invitation-to-a-discussion/>

Some further thoughtful comments from a museum curator, including one, which I think, is absolutely crucial –

"My impression, and please disabuse me if I am incorrect, is that when one is dealing with a single family and a single lender (Hosokawa and the Eisei Bunko) the exhibition narrative can be seriously impinged upon by the priorities of the lender. For one thing, to receive the cooperation of someone as esteemed as Mr. Hosokawa, one may not feel particularly free to bandy about concepts like whacking noses and kidnapping potters."

<http://asiansart.wordpress.com/2009/09/03/a-museum-curators-response/#more-248>

More commentary from a blog that deals with Asian art and politics:

"The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco has been targeted by an anonymous artistic and political intervention that parodies the current Lords of the Samurai exhibition with a well designed website and a series of pamphlets distributed in San Francisco. ..."

Many in the museum world will feel that the parody is entirely unfair. The museum is a non-profit organization dedicated to education, and museum staff include many of Asian heritage as well as many respected scholars who have advanced degrees in Asian art history. In addition, some recent exhibitions at the museum have attempted to deal (not always very explicitly) with the history of Orientalism, such as the recent one on photographs of Asia, particularly South Asia.

<http://www.froginawell.net/japan/2009/08/samurai-exhibit-pwned/>



Sword Guard from Art of the Samurai, Asian Art Museum



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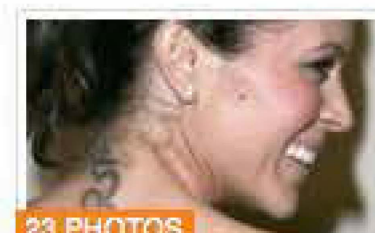
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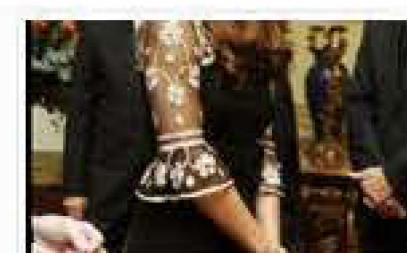
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