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Photos and complete biographies available on request

Indigenous Genius

The R.W. Northcutt Collection



Opening Reception - Friday, July 15, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Artist talk at 6:30 p.m.

Exhibition on view July 15 – August 26, 2011

Main Gallery

Houston, TX – **Art League Houston** is delighted to present ***Indigenous Genius***, a selection of artistic and scientific artifacts from the private collection of pioneering Ohio-based collector **R.W. Northcutt**, which chronicles the obscure yet poetic life of three particular wood-working animals – the beaver, the woodpecker and the termite – and explores the deep-rooted connections between animal and human methodologies. These works from ancient and contemporary periods, ranging from the late 19th century to near present times, retrace the fascinating yet often overlooked history of Animaliana [*latin animalia, animal + latin – ana, sayings, writings, anecdotes, facts, or objects of*]. The opening reception is **Friday, July 15 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.** with an artist talk at **6:30 p.m.**

Indigenous Genius celebrates the remarkable diversity and extraordinary accomplishments of ‘animal builders, as well as the continuity of their rich cultural traditions. The objects in this collection explore themes of building and

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manufacture, and highlight the incredible similarities found between animal and human wood-working construction techniques.

The R.W. Northcutt Collection features a quirky selection of objects, which include delicately crafted sculptures, dioramas, drawings and audio that portray remarkable accounts of animal artistry and ingenuity. Artifacts include a pair of Dutch Style shoes created by the combined efforts of woodpeckers and termites, beaver-inspired paraphernalia from the Fraternal Organization of Original Woodworkers, and a diorama illustrating a 19th century American Luddite movement amongst the beaver population of St. Louis, MO.

Sourced from a variety of museums, antique dealers, auctions, and flea markets, Northcutt's collection is driven by a life-long interest in the social analogs between animals and the natural world, in particular the 'making' connections between man and animal. Furthermore, the collection is inspired by Northcutt's passion for carpentry, and features a selection of artifacts that pay homage to the rich historical tradition of tradesmen who honor wood-working animals by incorporating animal-borne techniques, names, and images into their tools, icons, and decorations.

Transforming the gallery into a small scale version of a natural history museum, *Indigenous Genius* provides the viewer with an eclectic range of rare and significant artifacts that not only references the intertwining zoological and ethnological themes within social history, philosophy, labor movements, construction and social revolution, but also preserves and celebrates the exceptionally brilliant and resilient engineering skills of the natural world.

About R.W. Northcutt

Born in Victoria, Texas, R.W. Northcutt developed an interest in both animal behavior and construction science at an early age. He spent his youth building stables, mending fences, and trying to green-break horses. He went on to develop his aesthetic side by earning a Bachelors of Fine Art in Painting and a Masters of Fine art in Sculpture. He began accumulating Animaliana as a graduate student in Chicago and began to organize and exhibit his vast collection in 2003. He is currently a professor of Sculpture at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio where he teaches woodworking, welding, carving, and anthro-natural methods of sculpture.

ABOUT ART LEAGUE HOUSTON

Art League Houston (ALH) was founded in 1948 and incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1953. The mission of ALH is to cultivate awareness, appreciation, and accessibility of contemporary visual art within the community for its cultural enrichment. Art League Houston fulfills its mission through exhibitions, the Art League School, its annual *Texas Artist of the Year* program, and outreach programming.

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OUR MISSION

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SUPPORT

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