

DAILY NEWS

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NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

Saturday, November 24, 2001

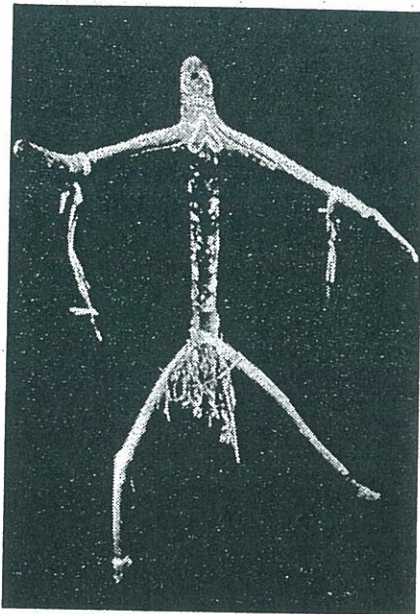
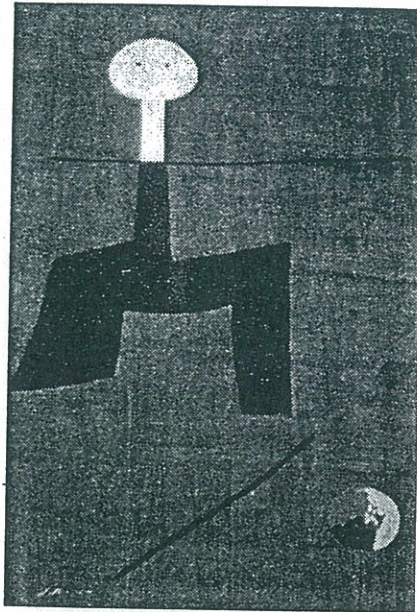


Figure from New Guinea, 1800s



Joan Miro's "Sans Titre," 1930

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Jan Krugier would say the shared greatness of primitive and modern art. The patriarch of the 20th-century masters gallery on E. 57th St. that bears his name has co-organized "Traces: Primitive and Modern Expressions" with Antonio and Ana Casanovas, whose Arte y Ritual Gallery in Madrid inspired the joint show.

The debt of European artists — Picasso, Miro, Giacometti, Max Ernst, Jean Dubuffet and others — to far-flung ancient cultures is well-known. But seldom has such a variety of works from those civilizations been brought together in one place to make the comparison. It is particularly exciting the way similarities between pieces from the Sudan, Indonesia, Alaska, Mali and Arizona catch a whole new continental drift.

ARTSMART

Since the Casanovases opened their gallery in 1990, Antonio has continued to shuttle the world in pursuit of rare pieces and entire collections. One of the latter was assembled by a Dutch carpenter who lived in Indonesia between 1935 and 1960 and fell in love with the Moluccan Islands' stone Tanimbar ancestor figures, finally bringing them back to Holland when he retired.

Surrounded by Krugier's carefully selected Picassos, Miros and more recent artworks, the example on display offers visitors another split-second challenge of telling the antique from the new.

There is a "hidden room," as the gallery calls it, beyond the public exhibition space, to accommodate the "Traces" overflow. Don't miss it.

Jan Krugier Gallery, 41 E. 57th St. (212) 755-7288.

Cella McGee