

Asmati Primitif

Artist's Statement; Pam Dixon

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The Asmat peoples of Indonesia have historically used ideographs and designs as an art for magic practices, war and decoration. Although the Asmat people have not had a traditional written language until 1968, the ancient ideographs and symbols have powerfully specific meanings, as recorded by Tobias Schneebaum in *Asmat Images*, (1985). Schneebaum provided these images to the collection of the Asmat Museum of Culture and Progress, with text, photographs and drawings.

The Asmati barely subsist in an environment of Alluvial Swamp, Lowland Swamp and Rain Forest, and have been isolated for centuries. They have no fields to plow; invasive flora makes for little to harvest, and there is virtually no significant fauna to cultivate. Until recently, this was home to cannibals and headhunters. Schneebaum actually lived with the Asmat and visited me in Benicia in the 1980's and regaled me with a ton of stories while I painted him surrounded by Asmat war shields and canoe prows. What a memory!

On the Covid Pandemic Clock, there is nothing but Time. So it happened that I found myself plowing thru my own jungle of unfinished work in the garage. And there was this wonderful plate David Stellato helped me create and fire from 2018 at Happy Life Pottery. I hauled it into the kitchen which doubles as a studio of sorts, and unearthed some old Archie Comic Books, WWD fashion magazines, sprays, Modge Pod and scissors. A favorite process, collage and juxtaposition of images. Magic.

The association of these constituencies are really not so far-fetched for they integrate; they co-exist and mingle intimately and unobtrusively creating harmony. Magic.