



Published by The Bee Publishing Company, Newtown, Connecticut

38 — Antiques and The Arts Weekly — August 9, 2013

‘Native American Splint Baskets’ Opens At Fenimore August 10



Market basket with handles, circa 1920-1930, Dwight Jimerson (1861-1948), Seneca, Allegheny, Iroquois, ash splints, wood, 16 inches high by 14¾ long by 13¾ wide. Thaw Collection, Fenimore Art Museum. —Richard Walker photo



Round “Porcupine” basket with cover, 1990?, detail opposite, Sylvia Gabriel (1930-2003), Passamaquoddy, Maine, ash splints, sweetgrass, 10 inches high by 7¾ diameter. Ralph T. Coe Foundation for the Arts, Santa Fe, N.M. —Richard Walker photo



Wall pocket, circa 1890, Micmac, northern New England and the Maritimes, ash splints, dyes 26½ inches high by 24 inches long by 12 inches wide. Ralph T. Coe Foundation for the Arts, Santa Fe, N.M. —Richard Walker photo

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — The Fenimore Art Museum will present “Plain and Fancy: Native American Splint Baskets” August 10–December 29. “Plain and Fancy” is an exhibition of baskets spanning two centuries, highlighting the art of ash splint basketry, which is a beautiful synthesis of form and function. The exhibition includes more than 30 baskets from the 1800s to the present day, most drawn from the Ralph T. Coe Foundation for the Arts, Santa Fe, N.M., and a few from the Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Collection at the Fenimore.

Ash splint basketry ranges in form and decoration from practical storage and market baskets to fanciful and

exquisitely designed artworks. Basketmakers incorporate numerous design elements, such as a variety of weaves: checker, wicker, twill and hexagonal plaiting. Artists also use sweetgrass and curled splints to embellish their baskets. Other design elements include dyes, stains and paint. Domes, triangles, dots or leaves are hand painted or stamped with a carved potato, turnip, cork or piece of wood.

The diversity of shapes and sizes produce unique and purposeful artwork that function as both decorative and utilitarian objects used in day-to-day life. The production of ash splint basketry was popular among Native peoples in the mid-Eighteenth Century,

gaining significant momentum in the Nineteenth. Basketmakers sold their wares door to door and through trade catalogs, as well as at shops, markets and trading posts frequented by tourists and travelers. In the later part of the Nineteenth Century, the Victorian fondness for elaboration encouraged makers to embellish their baskets with elegant handles, decorative weaves, dyed splints and sweetgrass.

Native men and women collaborate in preparing splints from ash trees, and there are both male and female basket artists. Methods employed today are very similar to those practiced in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Where basketry was once

learned predominantly in the home, Native communities now teach the techniques in schools and at tribal museums and community centers to ensure that the art form continues.

The circulation of objects and materials through trade, travel and tourism were instrumental in establishing ash splint basketry as a source of income, but global trade has now introduced a threat to ash trees and the art form itself: the emerald ash

borer. The beetle was accidentally imported from Eastern Asia in the late 1990s, and it has killed at least 50 to 100 million ash trees so far, and threatens to kill most of the 7½ billion ash trees throughout North America. Eradication of the beetle is not considered feasible, but quarantines on the movement of ash wood will hopefully slow its spread.

The Fenimore Art Museum is at 5798 Route 80. For more information, 607-547-1472 or www.fenimoreartmuseum.org.

US Exhibit Shines Light On Rare Beatles Photos

BY SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

TAOS, N.M. (AP) — Snow and frigid temperatures didn’t stop thousands of screaming teenagers from crowding into the Washington Coliseum in the nation’s capital for the Beatles first live concert on American soil.

And not having a flash didn’t stop photographer Mike Mitchell, then just 18 years old, from using his unrestricted access to document that historic February night in 1964 using only the dim light in the arena.

Ghostly shadows and streams of light filled some negatives. With the help of modern technology and close to 1,000 hours in front of the computer screen, Mitchell was able to peel back decades of grunge and transform those old negatives into a rare, artful look at one of pop culture’s defining moments.

Mitchell’s portraits of the Beatles are the centerpiece of a monthlong exhibition at the David Anthony Fine Art gallery in Taos — the first time the prints have been exhibited since being unveiled in 2011 at a Christie’s auction in New York City. The gallery started hanging the first of the framed prints a week prior to the Friday,

August 2, opening. They will remain on view through August 30.

“Just amazing,” gallery owner David Mapes said as he looked around the room at the large black and white prints and wondered aloud what it must have been like to be in Mitchell’s shoes that night.

Mapes pointed to a photograph of the four band members, their backs to the camera with a thin ribbon of light outlining their silhouettes. When he first saw it, he said he teared up. He knew he had to find a way to share it with others.

“It brought back memories of that time. I was a teenager and it was so much about love and everything was optimistic feeling,” he said.

It didn’t take long from the time the Beatles released their debut album in 1963 to go from a little British bar band to an international sensation. The Beatles’ reach eventually stretched beyond music and haircuts to religion and politics.

“The Beatles came to represent some of the yearnings for peace and hope and equality and a larger social justice. In the United States and throughout the world, their personali-

ties became as important as the music,” said Norman Markowitz, a history professor at Rutgers University.

For Paul Vance, who teaches a class on the Beatles at Winona State University in Minnesota, the band was the reason he pursued music. He was 11 years old when the Beatles first came to the United States.

The Beatles had good timing, he said, having arrived at a time when America was still heartbroken over the assassination of then-President John F. Kennedy and young people were looking for meaning in their lives.

“Much has been said and written about it,” Vance said of the Beatles’ influence. “It’s a very significant point that the world after the Beatles was a radically different place than the world before the Beatles, and they did influence and change so many aspects of not just American life, but life everywhere.”

Mitchell can’t predict what role his photographs will play as historians and music fans continue to examine the evolution of American pop culture. Still, those moments captured by his camera that February night tell a

grainy story of four young men who seemed to be having the time of their lives.

Mitchell remembers how hot it was inside the coliseum. The crowd was deafening but the resonating bass beats were unmistakable. He said the Beatles were “on fire” that night.

“They were really juiced. It was obvious at the time that they were really, really, really into it and I think the pictures really benefit from that,” he said.

Mitchell said his goal was simple. He wanted to make great portraits of the Beatles while discovering a little more about who they really were.

With no flash, he was forced to wait for the perfect time to snap that shutter. His photographs immortalized the important details of the moment in a bath of light while the rest faded into darkness. It was the concert that marked the beginning of his fascination with light.

“I think that was the first time in my life that I had to really look more deeply at light and take my queues from what the light was doing,” he said. “I learned to sort of feel from the light.”

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT

AntiquesandTheArts.com

www.AntiquesandTheArts.com

Originally Published in *Antiques and The Arts Weekly*, The Bee Publishing Company, Newtown, CT.
Republished here with permission. May not be reproduced for further dissemination, either in print or electronically, without express permission of the publisher.