

City of Newburgh

Press Release

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for immediate release

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Norman Sweeney Collection of African Art Featured in City Hall During Black History Month

In celebration of Black History Month, visitors to City Hall can enjoy an outstanding exhibit of African Art through February 28. The collection belongs to Norman Sweeney, a resident of Beacon, who specializes in African/Celtic art.

Sweeney, a native of the West of Ireland, said he became interested in African art "by accident."

Years ago, he met a vendor selling African masks and other artworks at a street fair. They struck up a conversation, and when the vendor wanted to take a break, Norman agreed to fill in for him. While the vendor was away, Norman sold a few things, without even knowing what it



was he was selling. The vendor was so impressed he offered him a job. Eventually, Norman went into business for himself.

In addition to discovering that selling African art can be profitable, Norman said he gained a deep respect for the culture of the various peoples of Africa. The son of an Irish carpenter, he said he could appreciate their mastery of the wood. He studied the origins of West African art in libraries and by visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum. In 1991, he traveled to Africa to see where the pieces are actually made.

"It was a remarkable experience," said Sweeney. He traveled from Ghana to the Ivory Coast, meeting master carvers from the Ashanti, Guro, and Baule people. He also traveled to Lome, Togo, known as "the Venice of Africa."

Currently, items from Sweeney's African Art collection are on display in the Donnell Library in Manhattan, and the Howland Library in Beacon, where Norman resides with his wife, Amelia.

For more information or to purchase pieces from the collection, please call (917) 685-7392, or visit Sweeney's website, www.madebyearth.com.