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THE VANCOUVER SUN


SECTION F

ARTS & LIFE

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ARTS EDITOR MICHAEL SCOTT: 604-605-2130 mscott@png.canwest.com

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2005

FEATURES EDITOR DENISE RYAN: 604-605-2615 dryan@png.canwest.com

FRESH SHEET



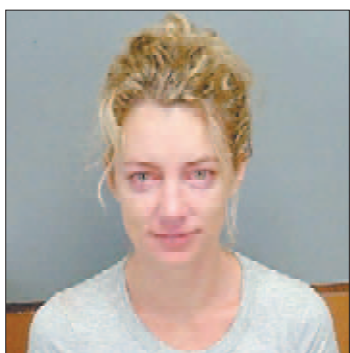
BELLA VISTA

Tony Bennett, 79, has donated an oil painting to the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The signature is the singer's family name, Anthony Benedetto. The *Washington Post*, reporting this, says Bennett's watercolours sell for at least \$10,000 a time; his oil paintings fetch up to \$60,000. This one will probably go on display but not right away; the museum is closed for renovations.

GANGSTA BRAND

50 Cent told *The Sun*, in England, that he's planning his own line of condoms and also a sort of, err, sex toy based on, umm, himself.

PAPARAZZI



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cynthia Watros was one of two cast members (the other was Michelle Rodriguez) of the hit ABC series *Lost* arrested early Thursday in Kailua, Hawaii, on suspicion of driving under the influence of an intoxicant. Both were released on \$500 bail each after being charged.

ARTS & LIFE MONDAY

THAI THIS NEXT: We love Thai food, we wear Thai silk, and now we can indulge in artful, de-stressing Thai massage.



The first panel of Hazel Wilson's epic retelling of the myth of the Golden Spruce: history stitched in glittering thread.

Making history

ART | Hazel Wilson uses her Haida button blanket maker's skills to depict the life and death of a legendary tree

BY JOHN VAILLANT

Hazel Wilson's one-woman show of Haida ceremonial robes, *The Story of K'iid K'iyaas*, is not only stunning and disturbing, it represents, literally, the making of history, bead by luminous bead, and stitch by painstaking stitch. The exhibition, which runs from Dec. 3 to Jan. 15 at the Marion Scott Gallery in Gastown, includes 15 lavishly decorated melton wool panels modeled on the ceremonial robes (also known as "button blankets") made and worn by many native people on the northwest coast. Each one depicts a scene from the mythical life and untimely death of the legendary Golden Spruce.

The tree, 50 metres tall and covered in luminous golden needles, was sacred to the

Haida people who describe it as a human being who had been transformed. For 300 years it stood on the bank of the Yakoun River in the Queen Charlotte Islands (Haida Gwaii) until a misguided logger-turned-activist felled it with a chainsaw.

Hazel Wilson, who was born in Haida Gwaii in 1941, was identified as a maker of button blankets while still a teenager. "They wouldn't even let me cook or fish," says Wilson of the elders in her family who insisted she concentrate on her sewing. "They didn't want me to be distracted." Apparently, these relatives saw the early spark that now, half a century later, arcs and crackles across

Hazel Wilson delves into Haida mythology with a series of panels.

the pieces in the current show.

Though worn and treasured by many coastal peoples, button blankets are the neglected stepchildren of the northwest coast arts world; they tend to be over-

shadowed by the masks, chests and monumental carvings we are used to seeing in galleries and public spaces. As a result, this show presents us with a rare opportunity: not only is this the first North American show in 20 years to be devoted to ceremonial robes, it is the first ever by a single artist, and the first to deal exclusively with variations on a single theme.

Traditional button blankets are appliquéd, most often with black and red melton wool, and then adorned with buttons and other decorations made of abalone, copper, mother of pearl or plastic. The designs, which usually represent clan crests, are often drawn by men and stitched by women.

See HAIDA F3



Soft-porn music vids an eternity of booty



KERRY GOLD
VANCOUVER SUN
POP

A woman is having two bottles of champagne poured down her naked backside while she's flexing her glutes with a lewd, well-practised intensity.

It's like watching two animals writhing in a shiny bag, and there's nothing sexy about it. It's bootyvolting.

Well, for 50 Cent it evidently is sexy, considering that his video for the single *Disco Inferno* zooms in on a pair of shiny, roiling female buttocks — bobbing in and out of camera view like so many sea mammals — about every five seconds on average. It's in black and white, so the things blend in, making it that much more pornographic.

Pornography has found life in the mainstream by the way of popular music.

And rapper 50 Cent, who plays tonight at GM Place, looks genuinely happy in his video — beaming, as if being surrounded by a sea of bobbing naked booties is his natural and proper habitat.

After what feels like an eternity of more pulsating booty, the last minute or so of the video is devoted to some topless girl-on-girl action.

The video for *Disco Inferno* was released as part of 50 Cent's limited edition CD-DVD package, *The Massacre* (released as a CD earlier this year). Parts of the video had been leaked on the Internet, but now the whole tit-and-kabooty is a feast for the eyes of anyone among his young

See VIDEOS WHERE F24



PAUL HAWTHORNE/GETTY FILES

50 cent's *Disco Inferno* video zooms in on roiling, thonged female buttocks.

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Panel 3: Thunderwoman. In this image, Hazel Wilson remembers the Golden Spruce in its prime. "The buttons in her palms remind us she has returned to the stars," Wilson explains. The blanket is made of brass, beads, buttons and gold lamé on melton cloth.

Wilson's art transcends cultural boundaries

From FI

However, Wilson, a Vancouverite who left Haida Gwaii with her 10 children in 1971, designs and sews her blankets on her own. While the materials and subject matter remain loyal to her Haida origins, her interpretations have the uninhibited, exuberant feel of a person who has broken free and found her own artistic voice.

Wilson's robes are all about four and-a-half feet high and five feet wide — a wearable size — and in each one the central form is the tree, its extraordinary appearance indicated by thousands of gold bugle beads arrayed like spruce needles along the densely beaded golden branches.

In Wilson's hands K'iid K'iyass possesses the iconic quality of the Tree of Life whose manifestations are manifold. The tree's time-bending journey begins in the ice age and passes through a great flood and a smallpox epidemic before arriving at the fateful present day.

"I was speechless. I was thinking 'I can't sell this for somebody's living room.'"

**GALLERY DIRECTOR
JUDY KARDOSH**

Her reaction when Hazel Wilson first unrolled the final three panels on the showroom floor.

In keeping with the Haida stories about the tree as transformer, its trunk also represents a human torso, alternately male or female, depending on which part of the story Wilson is telling. The faces and bodies, which form the core of the tree, possess an earnest, naive quality, reminiscent of some Mexican folk art.

While this contrasts somewhat starkly with the intricate and exacting beadwork, it gives the pieces a three-dimensional quality. The facial expressions: serenity, solemnity, terror, grief, are unmistakable and deeply affecting, the outstretched arms at once inviting and supplicating. This embracing gesture, which repeats itself throughout the show, is a wordless prayer to the Creator: "Do not forget us." Compared to the stern, aloof quality of so much coastal art, these pieces thrust you into the moment, whether it be one of peace or agony.

In addition to the buttons, Wilson's blankets are adorned with multi-colored beads, plastic bear

claws, gold lamé, copper and brass disks as well as personal items and found objects ranging from Metis-style beadwork to tiny stone birds from Mexico. To those not familiar with native West Coast art, the forms, themes and ornamentation could plausibly have originated in places as diverse as Oaxaca, Haiti, or Samarkand. In this sense, Wilson's work is Outsider art of the first order.

But what truly sets this body of work apart from its highly formalized counterparts is the fact that these robes link legend, history and the natural world with current events. The series creates a visual suspension bridge between the Haida mythworld and our harsh, shared reality of environmental destruction and eco-terrorism.

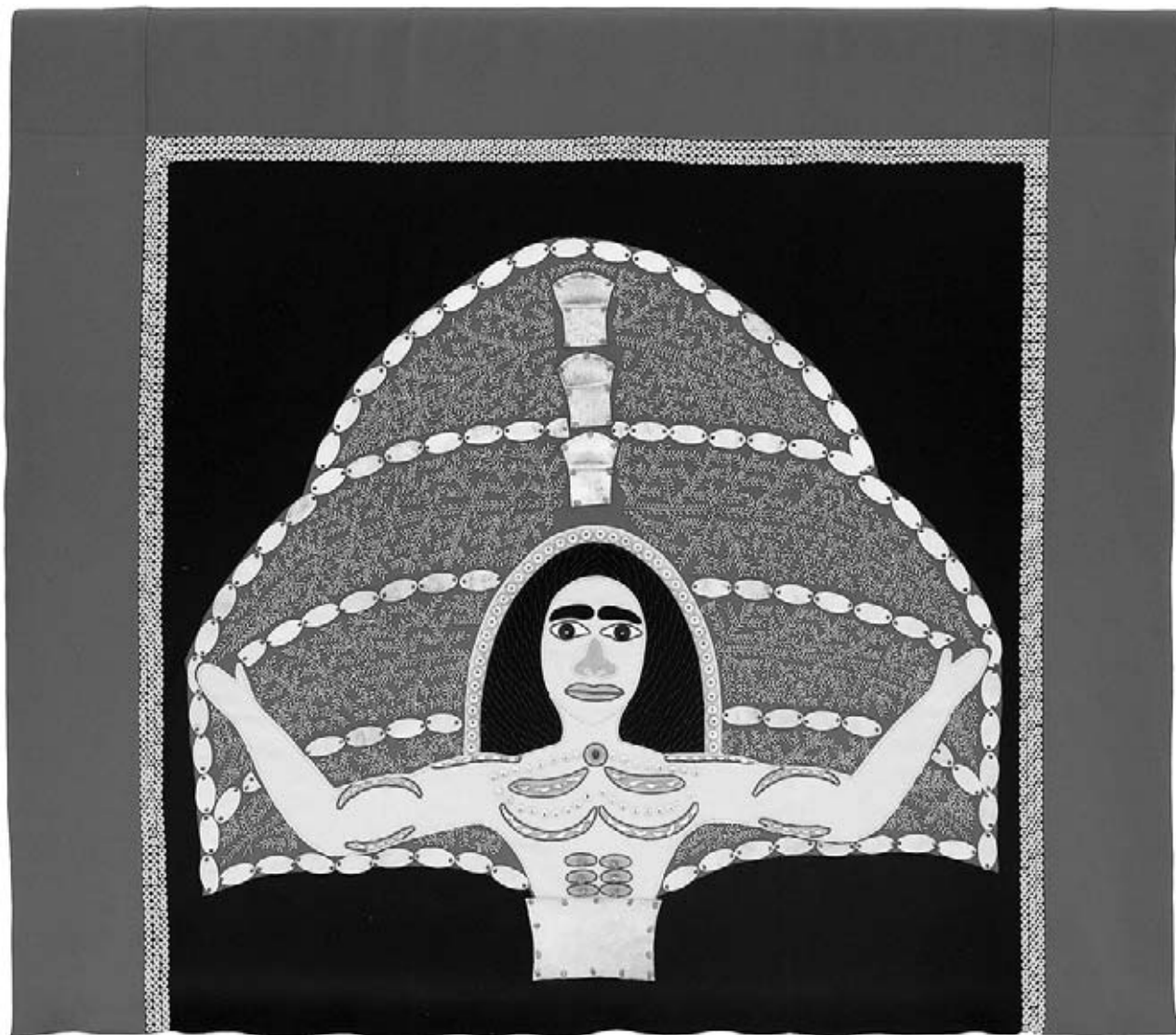
The most startling works in the Wilson show are, without a doubt, the final three panels, which depict the felling of the tree. The first shows the male face contorted by sorrow and pain, the trunk/torso patterned with scarlet slashes, and together they beg the question: Is this a forest tree, or Christ on the cross? "I was speechless," explained gallery director Judy Kardosh, when Wilson first unrolled this blanket on the showroom floor. "I was thinking 'I can't sell this for somebody's living room.'" Indeed, Kardosh's hope is not to disperse these works to her clients around the world, but to keep this unique series together, here in British Columbia.

In the next panel, we see the tree falling: the human figure plummets through space as coppers, historic symbols of native coastal wealth, tumble after him. Red beads, indicating spatters of blood, dot his flowing black hair while the scarlet field behind is hung with iridescent beads, the tears of the Haida who, with so many others, mourn, not just the loss of this beautiful and potent tree, but the great forests that once surrounded it.

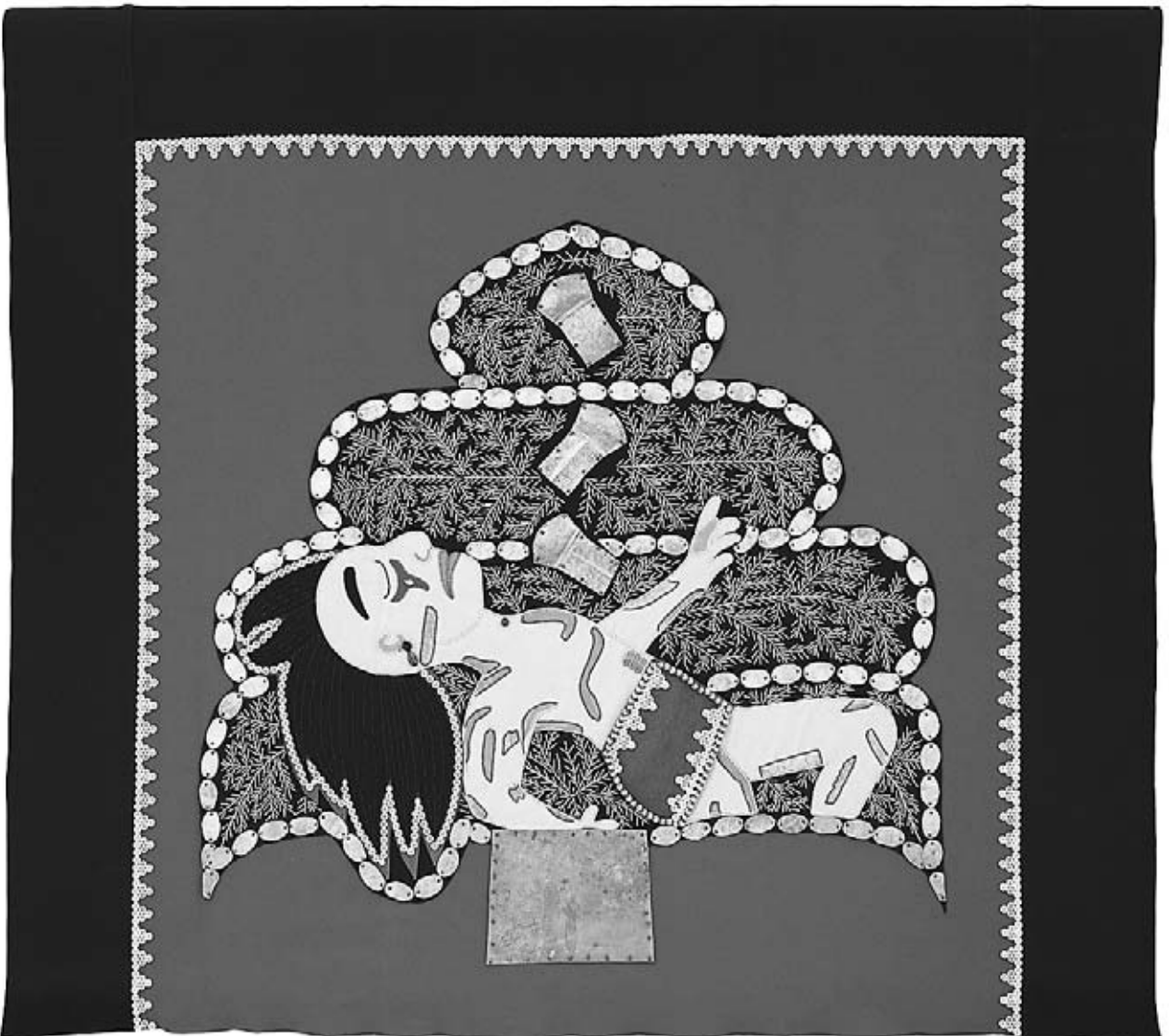
In the final scene a small heart set with a single glistening tear drifts above the scene of destruction while a helping hand reaches down from above. If you look closely at the veining in this, the hand of the Creator, you can see the initials "H. W."

jvaillant@aol.com

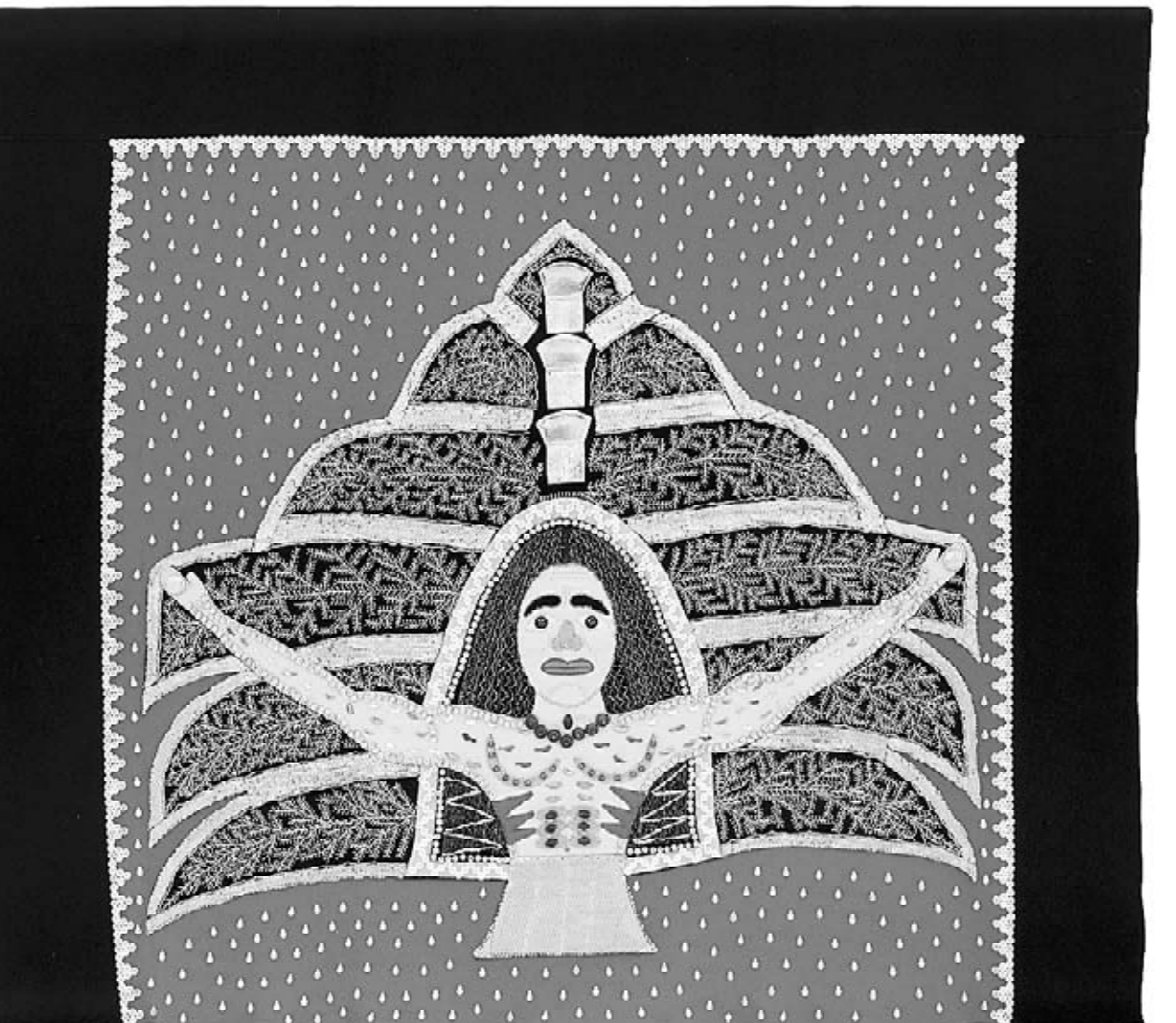
Vancouver author John Vaillant, is the recipient of this year's Governor-General's Literary Award for Nonfiction, for his masterful book about K'iid K'iyass, *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed*.



Panel 9: Young K'iid K'iyass. The spirit of the tree, in his prime is "slim, golden and handsome — a beautiful young spruce. K'iid K'iyass was once a human being — a man. The three coppers, or tribal shields, signify that he would grow tall and live to be 300 years old." Wilson used brass, beads and buttons on melton cloth for this panel.



Panel 12: Falling. The tragic climax of the myth shows the Golden Spruce as it crashes to earth. "When K'iid K'iyass was cut down, he was filled with pain, sadness and tears," Wilson explains. "He was fallen." She used brass, beads, buttons and paint on melton cloth, for this panel.



Panel 14: Tears of Haida Gwaii. "When K'iid K'iyass, the Golden Spruce, was felled in 1997," the artist relates, "it filled the Haida with pain and sadness. This is K'iid K'iyass after he was cut down. The red marks on his sides indicate where the chainsaw ripped through him. The tears in the background are the tears of the Haida people. K'iid K'iyass has fallen, but his spirit is still present." Made of brass, beads, buttons and shells on melton cloth.

You're invited

The public is invited to attend the opening of Hazel Wilson's exhibition, *The Story of K'iid K'iyass*, today at 2 p.m. at Marion Scott Gallery, 308 Water (opposite the steam clock in Gastown). Speakers will include: Guujaaw, president of the Council of the Haida Nation, Peter Malkin, director of the Bill Reid Foundation, and Allan Wilson, chief of the Duugwaa St'Langwaa 7laanaas Clan.



Gujaaw