

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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www.headhuntrevisited.org
Mytinger Project, LLC

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Michele Westmorland, Karen Huntt, and Wings Trust present:

HEADHUNT REVISITED

Charting Cultural Change in Melanesia

An expedition to the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, May and June 2005

Sponsored by Wings Trust

Team will carry The Explorers Club flag

SEATTLE, Wash.—Photographers Michele Westmorland and Karen Huntt, managers of The Mytinger Project LLC, proudly announce their agreement with Wings Trust (www.wingstrust.org), an organization dedicated to promoting the efforts of women explorers, to assist them in developing support for an expedition to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. “Headhunt Revisited” will retrace the 1926-1930 route of artist Caroline Mytinger, bringing her long-lost work to light, and will document current traditions of the native peoples in the region.

Sponsorship from Wings Trust will allow tax-deductible donations to be made to this exciting project. *The mission of Wings Trust is “to identify, to research, to promote, and to celebrate the contributions of extraordinary women explorers, in all areas/fields of study, around the world, from all periods of history.”*

Nearly 80 years ago, two intrepid women set out by freighter from San Francisco with little more than \$600 and a tin of paints. Their objective was to paint portraits of the tribal peoples of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands before the encroachment of modern, European-style culture changed their ways of life forever.

Caroline Mytinger, a famous portrait artist of high society patrons, and her companion, Margaret Warner, traveled throughout the South Pacific for nearly four years in pursuit of their dream. Until now, Mytinger’s art was hidden from view for nearly 70 years. Today, veteran photographers Michele Westmorland, of Mill Creek, Washington, and Karen Huntt, of Bellevue, Washington, plan to follow in the footsteps of these intrepid women, to bring Caroline’s art to life, and to document the cultural changes that have since occurred in this remote area.

“It has been found that the decline in primitive populations which inevitably follows the coming of white men to their countries is not always caused by new diseases or abuse alone. There is also a mysterious disintegration of the spirit, a weakening of the will-to-live that gives microbes and bullying a fallow soil to fall on...” (Caroline Mytinger, *New Guinea Headhunt*.)

Caroline, a woman ahead of her time, realized the enormous impact that western influence was having on indigenous peoples even then, and set out to record traditional cultural rituals and characteristics through her paintings.

Westmorland and Hunt have spent five years researching Caroline's life and art. The author of two books, "*Headhunting in the Solomon Islands*," and "*New Guinea Headhunt*," Caroline was also a prolific portrait artist, writer, model, and traveler. Born in Sacramento, California in 1897, she was the model for Charles Dana Gibson's "Gibson Girl," an icon of the early 20th century. After completing her education as an artist, she made her living traveling throughout the United States painting portraits and socializing with many of the movers and shakers of the 1920s, 30s and 40s. Among her many subjects were Mr. and Mrs. Philip W. Pillsbury of Minneapolis, Mrs. Philip Weyerhaeuser of Tacoma, Mrs. Brewster Morgan of Seattle, and many other prominent families and captains of industry.

In 1930, twenty-five of Caroline's original oils of Melanesian portraits were exhibited at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, under the guidance of Margaret Mead, the most famous anthropologist of her time. After a few other exhibits, the paintings disappeared from view. Westmorland discovered twenty-three of them in storage at the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. They are in excellent condition, their original bamboo frames intact. Westmorland and Hunt also found sketches and scrapbooks at the Monterey Museum of Art in Monterey, California, where Caroline lived for the last 40 years of her life. Other discoveries include love letters from her husband, personal photos, and assorted ephemera.

Westmorland and Hunt plan a two-month trip through the Solomon Islands and coastal Papua New Guinea. The expedition, currently scheduled for May and June 2005, will stop in numerous locales, including Malaita, Marovo Lagoon, Rabaul, Rossel Island, Samarai, and Port Moresby, to name just a few, and will journey up the Fly River to Madiri, ending at the Thursday Island chain. The team will travel by chartered boats, and will include local interpreters, anthropologists, and historians.

Through digital photography, writing and videography, the project will bring Caroline's story to a new audience, and raise awareness of Melanesian cultures. Articles, a book, a documentary film and a traveling exhibit are planned after the expedition.

Financial and in-kind contributions, tax-deductible under IRS regulations, are currently being solicited. The expedition must raise approximately \$500,000 for all anticipated expenses. Checks should be made out to "Wings Trust-Mytinger Project," and mailed to: Wings Trust, c/o Milbry Polk, P.O. Box 52, 236 Route 9W, Palisades, NY 10964.

Wing's Trust is a New York state non-profit organization. Wings Trust has received a letter of determination from the Internal Revenue Service stating that it is a not-for-profit organization under Internal Revenue code section 501(c)(3).

