

# News & Experiences

*It's never been about the materials, or even techniques. It's the voice. It's the voice that remains authentic and true and Native and specific to whomever you are and who your people are and the stories you have to tell.* —Teri Greeves, Coe Center Honorary Director

March 2020



Eliza Naranjo Morse, after Canoe Model in the Coe Center collection, 2020.

## A Note from Rachel

Rachel de W. Wixom

President, Executive Director

In these times of uncertainty, turning to art can help. You can be inspired and energized by immersing yourself into it; art can challenge your mind, take you places—and yet it can also be calming. Perhaps you gravitate towards making it, writing it, or reading it, or just enjoy the challenge of looking—looking deep, as Bruce Bernstein refers to below.

Also in Bruce's article, Eliza Naranjo Morse speaks of the man in the canoe as "traveling alone with the intention of caring for people." Perhaps that's where we can make the greatest difference is to come together across our distances. It can be as simple as a phone call or a text, or through the more sophisticated technologies such as video



Unknown artist (Massai, East Africa), **Knife**, n.d.. metal and hide, 4 x 4.75 in. (10.16 x 12 cm). AF0081

## Did you know...?

Brittany Beauregard

This knife looks to be most likely from the Turkana tribe in northern Kenya, however, it could have originated from any of the Nilo-Hamitic tribes. Its age could be placed somewhere in the mid-20th century. In all scholarly articles and auctions this knife is called either a "wrist knife," an "ararait," or an "abarait." It is worn exclusively by men on their right wrist as either a daily tool for cutting meat or carving wood, or as a second line of defense in close-quarter combat for slashing the opponent's face or gouging an eye. The leather cover (akururu), which is usually made from goat, cow, or donkey hide, can be removed easily and quickly for this purpose. The metal was originally molded using stones; however, hammers are now commonplace, and the metal beads (ngidany) on the ends of the leather cover secure it to the blade. In some photographs, men can be seen wearing more than one blade on their wrist.

conferencing—but the importance is to stay in touch with family, friends, neighbors, and in particular with those who may be living alone.

Let us make our way through this together. Be inspired by the creativeness in you—take the time to dive into it, enjoy it, and reach out to include others.

Wishing you and your loved ones all the very best during this difficult time.



Unknown (Mi'kmaq or Penobscot (attr.), Canada), *Canoe Model with Paddler*, c. 1825. Wood, porcupine quill, and Birchbark, 5.5 x 2.75 x 13.25 in. (14 x 7 x 33.6 cm). NA1069

## Happening at the Coe...

Bruce Bernstein

On March 6, at our inaugural artist-hosted-First Friday, artist Eliza Naranjo Morse chose a series of objects to draw. She began her afternoon at the Coe by choosing pieces from the collection that she and Coe visitors would be invited to draw as well. The Coe provided paper and an assortment of pencils. She selected a group of "people" from around the world—Congo, British Columbia, Idaho, Nova Scotia or Maine, and New Mexico. In choosing a series of faces from around the world, she was thinking that the group "needed to meet one another." She thought the group "were welcoming and inclusive; "...saying to Coe visitors, "you're all welcome here."



Eliza placed the five figures in the middle of the table and invited everyone to join her. At first, just our volunteers sat down and began to draw, but as First

Friday visitors arrived, they joined in too. Working together, being together, soon resulted in a relaxed atmosphere of people chatting and drawing; a community of people able to immerse themselves in Eliza's clear-headed and beautiful artistic vision.

*Brittney Beauregard is a Museum Studies major at the Institute of American Indian Arts and an intern at the Ralph T. Coe Center for the Arts.*



Above: Coe collection at Kha'p'o Community School. Below: artwork made by students at Kha'p'o Community School after interacting with the Coe collection.

## Making a Difference...

Bess Murphy

Recently Samantha Tracy, our collections manager, and I had the privilege of visiting the art classes at the [Kha'p'o Community School](#). This is now our third year of bringing works of art from the Coe collection to [Eliza Naranjo Morse's](#) classroom for her students in kinder through sixth grade to work with hands-on.



We brought a selection of artworks from different locations, time periods, and materials including a splint ash basket in the shape of [corn](#) by [Theresa Neptune Gardner](#), a carved cedar [raven spoon](#) by [Alver Tait](#), and a

carved wooden pig from Papua New Guinea. After introducing the students to the works, they were then able to create their own interpretations of the pieces. They gathered at tables and drew, painted, or even sculpted their artworks.

It is so incredible to see how the students gravitate to different objects or materials, share their own stories about what they

The canoe appealed to Eliza because the piece is so unique and stood out from the other collection items. She suggests, "he is on a mission of inclusive community...the hearts on the boat were a selling point [in choosing it] ...traveling alone with the intention of caring for people." Made of wood with heart shaped medallions of quill work, the paddler sits upright in the canoe's cockpit. Pumping his arms against some ethereal water, he is dressed in buckskins and his accoutrements held in place with leather belts. Tucked in his waistband is his tomahawk. His face and body have touches of red paint.



Sitting comfortably with pencils and paper the conversation flowed —Eliza is defined by art and drawing. Growing up in an artist house she was always surrounded by art whether it

was her well-known mother, Nora Naranjo Morse, or one of the celebrated members of her extraordinary family. Unassuming and a natural artist, Eliza having been one of the artists in the IMPRINT exhibition (2018) has spent wonderful time at the Coe. At that time, a small grant opened another doorway for the Coe to reciprocate and bring Coe objects to the Kha'p'o Immersion school where Eliza teaches art. This program continues today, and Curator Bess Murphy shares some photographs of recent visits.

We spent this First Friday in Deep Looking, needing to observe more carefully and develop some understanding of the objects before attempting to draw them. Returning to our canoe, it is a model made from a solid piece of wood, while a full-sized canoe would be made of birchbark stretched over a wood frame. Our paddling canoe man has an undeniably look of determination on his face that is made more so by the red paint on his cheeks. The piece was likely made to sell—sharing a bit of the maker's history and culture with its buyer. The canoe has some wear and breakage; the man's paddle is broken as are three pieces that once sat on the prow of the canoe. Behind the main is tiered round stack, perhaps a series of boxes or baskets filled with food and other items to trade. Maybe there was a sail attached or perhaps more supplies and trade items. The wear and breakage create mystery—we look deeper.

*Bruce Bernstein is Chief Curator, Director of Innovation at the Coe center.*



think the pieces are or mean and create elaborate narratives around them.

One student created a three-dimensional rendering in paper of the corn basket, and another drew the pig in a jail—

eventually building it out fully in paper and showing each angle of the pig and his setting. It is a gift for the Coe and the pieces that we bring to be able to share in these acts of creative experimentation, breathing new lives and stories into our artworks and being able to inspire new creations alongside them.



Above: Student at Kha'p'o Community School working with a piece from the Coe Collection.

*Bess Murphy is Curator at the Coe Center.*

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