

# The Virtual Coe

*Being together while being apart...*

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September 4, 2020

*A smile,  
more than words can convey...*



In June, the Coe Center announced that it was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Art Works grant to support the first major solo exhibition of **James Kivatoruk Moses** (Inupiaq, 1903-1981), scheduled for 2021. Accompanying the exhibition will be a printed catalog that will include a selection of works with expanded narratives.

In preparation, the Coe has hired a photographer to work alongside Samantha Tracy, our Collections Manager, to photograph the Moses collection. This process has included a full one-on-one experience of handling multiple drawings and enjoying all of the intricate details and scenic narratives Moses created.

Among his pictures are numerous hunting scenes—with polar bears featuring in many of them. One of his drawings depicts a man with his dog who is about to encounter a grinning polar bear that is looming behind an iceberg and appears to want the man's kill—a seal.

These profound drawings give us a glimpse of stories and personal encounters that Kivatoruk Moses experienced during his lifetime. The Coe can't wait to share these amazing drawings with you! In the meantime, here is a snippet of the grinning polar bear.

**James Kivatoruk Moses** (Inupiaq, 1903-1981), *Untitled* (detail), mid 19th C.  
Colored pencil, watercolor on paper, and ink. L00172

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*Bear in a basket...*



Red cedar bark twined basketry is a distinctive Ts'msyen art form. The positioning of a bear on the small bowl suggests the weaver's clan and family association.

The Ts'msyen of the Annette Islands Reserve were highly influenced by their neighbors, the Tlingit and Haida, and the beautiful false embroidery on their baskets. Using a different twist combined with the elements of false embroidery created a distinct style of weaving, which differs from that of the Tlingit, Haida, and even other Ts'msyen. It is truly an art form specific to the people of Metlakatla, Alaska.

Ted Coe wrote that he first saw this basket in an unfinished state in Ketchikan, Alaska, being worked on by what he described as an "ancient Tsimshian lady." He offered to

purchase it on the spot but was unsuccessful. Some years later, he found the basket in the Quintana Gallery in Portland, Oregon, and purchased it.

A handful of weavers today are working on mastering and revitalizing twined cedar bark basketry, reconnecting with a proud heritage. In a powerful and poignant story, we can hear directly from Ts'msyen people—please [click here to learn more about this piece](#), the [Ts'msyen people](#), and how it was made.

Violet Booth (attrib.) (Ts'msyen (Tsimshian), 1912-1996), [Bowl-Basket](#), c. 1990. Red Cedar Bark and bear grass, 3 h x 3.75 diam. in. NA1265

## *A bear's mien...*



This particular bear was honed by Stan Hill out of porous whalebone, a material perfectly matched to the nubby texture of bear fur. Ted described the subtly evocative power of this piece perfectly:

*Somehow, Stan has understood how to portray the uncertainty of a bear's mien which implies multiple possibilities that have often misled people in the past, to their great regret: aggressiveness, sniffing the air in a seemingly placid way, and a steady slowness implied by the heavy musculature and furry camouflage that does not necessarily fit what a bear may or may not do, turn around and eat a berry or explode at you!*

Learn more about the artist [Stan Hill here](#).

Stanley Hill (Mohawk, 1921-2003), [Bear Figurine](#), 1992. Whalebone, 3.75 x 5 x 3.5 in. NA1121c

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