The Virtual Coe  Being together while being apart....

October 30, 2020

What does a gourd have to do with it?
Round-bottomed wooden bowls like this one represent a highly perfected art form practiced for countless generations across the islands of Hawaii. These bowls or 'umeke or 'umeke lā'au were often referred to as calabash bowls by non-Hawaiians because they resemble gourds and carved gourd cups and bowls.

The 'umeke are made in many different forms, from tall and slender to low and wide-mouthed and are typically carved from kou wood, an indigenous species, which is relatively soft and easy to carve while also highly resistant to boring insects.

Learn more about this piece [here](#).

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Honoring the special powers of women...
This wooden headdress is a superb example of an art form. It is typical of what Western museums and galleries display to represent Gelede, a festival involving a lavish display of wooden and cloth garments, dance, music, singing, and drama performed to amuse, inspire, and educate the viewers, who are also integrated into the performances. The Gelede masks and performances are also a way to send messages of compassion and solidarity. (watch a 2017 celebration [here](#))

The annual festival is in veneration of the society’s powerful older women and solicits their benevolence to ensure community prosperity. Poignantly, men are masked performers who wear the Gelede headdresses that venerate and honor female status.

The wooden helmet is worn on top of the head, with a veil covering the dancer’s face. The headdress
is generally carved in two parts, the lower part often with the form of a human face and the upper part often with an elaborate coiffure.

To learn more and how this piece came to the Coe collection please click here.

Artist Unknown (Yoruba, Nigeria or Benin), *Gelede Headdress*, c.1920. Wood, 13.75 x 7.5 x 10.5 in. AF0005

**Made of gold, so beautiful to see...**

As a Native American I know the majority of the cultural values within the U.S. The staff at the Coe introduced my fellow peers
and I to the African collection and this was very exciting, yet curious.

They had similar things to us Natives in the U.S and I wanted to see what we had in common. The item I decided to pick [to study] was the Gold Fulani earrings. I decided to pick these because all the Pueblos in New Mexico have a unique way of making earrings. The African style was so amazing because they are made out of pure gold, which was so beautiful to see.

—Dynette Chavez (Jicarilla Apache) [The Mirror Effect: Reflections upon our Realities, Hands-On Curatorial Program exhibition, 2017]

These three beautiful Fulani gold earrings range in sizes large, medium, and small. They are remarkably striking because of their consistent design in each pair’s folds and twists, causing them to resemble a leaf in shape. There is some weight to the earrings but not as heavy as you would imagine. What is also impressive is the rawhide case that stores the earrings.

Click on these images to see more or here for more information.

Artist unknown (Fulani), Fulani Gold Earrings, n.d.. Gold plate, dims varied. AF0084a-c.