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

December 11, 2020

A cosmopolitan lady...

We, unfortunately, do not know the identity of this serene
Haida woman. Her Haida identity is indicated by her Indigenous face, hairstyle, and some details of her clothing. Her posture suggests someone of stature and wealth. And, she is clearly cosmopolitan, regally holding herself while wearing fashionable Euro-American clothing. Perhaps her name was not as important to the carver as her compelling presence that results in an authentic and unblinking portrayal of Haida people as they saw themselves in the mid-19th century—world citizens.

Haida people of the Pacific Northwest region of North America have a long tradition of carving argillite—the grey to black carboniferous shale is exclusively found at the Slatechuck argillite quarry near Skidgate within their territory. A high moisture content makes argillite easier to carve; therefore, it is kept as moist as possible after quarried. It is often wrapped with a damp cloth and stored somewhere moist, perhaps buried in the ground.

Learn more about this piece here.

Artist Unknown (Haida), Sculpture of Haida Woman, c. 1890. Argillite, 7.75 x 2.25 x 1.75 in. NA1268

What does an octopus have to do with a beaded bag?
This octopus bag by Elizabeth Jacob from Webequie First Nation (Northern Ojibwa) has a background of white beads surrounded by colorful floral designs. The beaded floral elements depict stems, buds, blooming flowers, and leaves with four shades of green. The bag's interior is lined with cotton canvas and two caribou hide strips to close the bag. The reverse of the bag, which is not beaded, displays the fully smoked caribou hide.

*Octopus* is a reference to the dangling tentacle-like tabs at the base of the pouch. Before the coined term *octopus bag*, they were known as "fire bags" to the Métis and were used to carry fire-starting tools, tobacco, pipes, and ammunition.

There is an entry from Ted about the time he visited a friend in Manitoulin Island. While out and about, Ted came across an octopus bag similar to this one. It was clear that it was by the same artist, so he immediately asked for the information, and the name Elizabeth Jacob was given. In Ted's previous provenance records, Louise Q. Bea was the listed maker. The friend had also mentioned Elizabeth is the daughter of Elder
and former Chief Josie Jacob from Webequie First Nation of Ontario, Canada. Unfortunately, there is no further information on Elizabeth.

To learn a little more about octopus bags, here is an article on Métis artist Jennine Krauchi. She mentions some historical context on the octopus bag. It also highlights a 26-foot tall octopus bag she created for an exhibition at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in 2016.

Elizabeth Jacob (Webequie First Nation (Northern Ojibwaj)), *Octopus Bag*, c.1980s. Smoked caribou hide, beads, cotton canvas, felt. 35.75 x 8.25 in. NA0708

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*Experience is the "awe" in awesome!*
Recently, the Coe had the pleasure of photographer Cara Romero using our new building for staging her extraordinary photography.

This series I’m working on is highly imaginative and evokes a familiar feeling for me. I keep thinking, “I feel like I’ve been here before.” Often while creating, I just have to really lean into my daydreaming space, my subconscious and trust where that takes me visually. That’s where these images spring forth from, and I hope they feel magical. They are a culmination of my experiences and skills, a lifetime of my visual consumption of 100 years+ photography, all the while searching for more of our Native stories.... —Cara Romero

While the New Mexico sun shone outside, Cara and her crew recreated the far north with fog and
snow machines to capture the essence and meanings of model Golga Oscar’s Yup’ik heritage and life. The image is planned as part of her photographic installation called *Native Noir*, which celebrates cultural heritage while broadening public understanding of the ongoing erasure of Native Americans from American history. The Coe plans to open the exhibition in summer 2022.

Read more from the artist and about this event at Cara at the Coe.

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**Collections Spotlight, December 15!**

The next Collections Spotlight Zoom event is December 15, 3 pm MST. It is free. Sign up [here](#).

**Jordan Poorman Cocker** is a curator, artist, and designer. She is our next host for Collections Spotlight. Jordan is an enrolled member of the Kiowa Tribe and of Tongan descent and holds a Master of Museum and Heritage Practice from Victoria University of Wellington, as well as a Bachelor of Design from Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. Jordan’s artwork has been exhibited at local and international institutions including the Jacobson House 2016, New Zealand Architecture Week 2014, and the Prague Quadrennial 2015. She currently works with Gilcrease Museum as a Curatorial Scholar of Indigenous Art funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.

**Collections Spotlight**, a program developed in partnership with [First American Art Magazine](#), is an interactive, online monthly discussion that brings together diverse scholars and Native artists who select artworks from the Coe’s collection to interpret and discuss. The virtual Zoom format also brings together attendees from diverse regions. Attendee questions are accepted throughout the experience via chat, and at the end opened to audio. These events are free and open to the general public.

To view all past recorded events on the Coe YouTube channel, [click here](#).

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