

# The Virtual Coe

*Being together while being apart....*

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March 5, 2021

*The moon and the cosmos...*





This elegant figure was created in the **Lake Tanganyika region** of the southeastern Democratic Republic of Congo in the early 20th century.

The face and body are covered with intricate skin-markings and an elaborate skull-cap hairstyle. The crisscrossing lines of scarification form triangles that may represent the moon and the cosmos.

This small figure is part of an extraordinary carving tradition, with fine details of cultural expression, aesthetics, cosmology, and philosophies. The piece is a superb example of the power and importance of art to make material a culture's deep meanings and values. Each dot representing scarification pulls the viewer deeper into the

lush surface and fine patina. The woman's expression might be read as sublime, content with her world, and her place within it.

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

Artist Unknown (**Tabwa**), *Female Figure*, c. 1900. Wood, beads, and pigment, 7.75 x 1.375 x 1.5 in. AF0060

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*The bowl of voices....*



Imagine it is 700 CE and you are walking through the cool lush green rainforests of the highland Mayan lands of today's Guatemala.

The leaves around you so green, they almost turn blue. Water droplets fall from the heavens, like the continuation of the star lights you cannot see; small rays beaming downwards and melting unto the Earth below. You hear the call of the sacred **quetzal bird** through the mysterious shadows, and suddenly a choir-like sound wave of colorful feathers envelopes you, chirping and messaging each other in harmony with the cicadas and buzzing insects celebrating life. The humid smell of breathing soils and rocks fills your nostrils as you gaze upwards unto the sunlight that

is guiding you on your way home. And all this in a split blink of time, a momentary concept of the Mayan fourth dimension, where all beings have their unique calling in relation to the self, the earth, the sun, the stars, and moon...

This Mayan Pottery Bowl is thought to have originated in 600-900 CE, around the height of the Maya civilization, what has been labeled by scholars as the Late Classic era. This was their golden age, where cities, such as **Tikal** ("the place of the voices") in all their splendid and delight, were booming with beauty, intellect, and sophistication across their networked urban centers...

Follow the story and learn more [here](#).

Artist Unknown (Mayan), **Bowl**, 600-900 CE. Ceramic, pigment, 2.75 x 7 (diam.) in. PC 0006

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## *Spotlight on SPOTLIGHT*



It has been almost a year since America Meredith of **First American Art Magazine** reached out to us to create a virtual program in response to the COVID-19 shutdowns



across the country. The Coe prides itself on providing meaningful, hands-on experiences of Indigenous art—through our collection and our public programs. It was admittedly a challenge for us to imagine how we could simulate the power of working with a piece in person, the incredible knowledge and understanding that one acquires through careful and respectful handling.

However, the program which America proposed, while simple in premise, has proven to be an incredibly meaningful tool for creating virtual hands-on engagement with the Coe collection and the works of some of the most brilliant artists working today.

Read more [here](#) as curator Bess Murphy reflects on the Coe Center's program **COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT**

Above: artist Elizabeth James-Perry hosts COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT June 2020.  
Artist Unknown (Thaltan), Necklace, c. 1875. Bones, beads, ribbon, shell, and cordage, 12.75 x 4.5 in. NA1083

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*To view past The Virtual Coe issues, please click [here](#).*

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