Feminine poetry

I put that insect in the middle because where I grew up, there are a lot of insects. One day when I was bored, I watched them going up and down, and they made me realize that insects can be small but very strong and powerful... —Zodwa Maphumulo

The story goes that telephone wire basket weaving, or Imbenge, was invented by artists Bheki Dlamini and Elliot Mkhize while night watchmen in the 1960s. This art form was introduced as “night watchman’s art”, using woven telephone wires to decorate their baton sticks. At a certain point, Mkhize chose to make a bowl-form, and hence, the art of telephone wire baskets began.

The artist of this basket, Zodwa Maphumlo, was one of the first women to learn telephone wire basket
weaving from masters Bheki Dlamini and Elliot Mkhize. Zodwa Maphumulo was born in 1960 in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal.

The Zulu people are famous for their woven baskets, or ukhamba, that were sometimes woven so tight they were used to store beer. Beer was highly prized by the Zulu warriors, as you may have remembered in this Virtual Coe on the Zulu Ladle. Imbenge is a Zulu word for beer pot covers and is traditionally made with grass and palm. According to Coe, “The baskets evolved from coiled beer-pot covers, traditionally made from Lala Palm. With the modern age came brightly colored plastic insulated copper wire, which eventually replaced the traditional materials in urban areas.” After the discovery of the recycled telephone wire, basket weaving has taken on a whole other use and purpose. Today, the telecommunications wire is used in various creative ways representing this South African one-of-a-kind transitional art and contemporary weavers.

What story do you see in this basket? What was the artist trying to depict?

Learn more directly from the artist HERE.

Zodwa Maphumulo (Zulu), Basket, c. 2006. Telephone wire, 5 (tall) x 17 in. diam. AF0032

---

**Hands-On returns....**

The 2022 Hands-On Curatorial Program provides an opportunity for high school students to return to work hands-on with the Coe collection of over 2,300 works of Indigenous art from around the world.

It is a wonderful feeling to be able to bring a new group of Hands-On Curators back into the Coe building. After shifting from in-person meetings to a fully virtual format way back in 2020, we are thrilled to introduce a new crew of high school students to the Coe’s collection and the process of curating an exhibition from beginning to end.
This year the Coe is joined by students from across Santa Fe. Cruz Davis-Martinez and Skyler Hraber are both seniors at New Mexico School for the Arts, Tyler Gonzales is a senior at Academy for Technology and the Classics, and Himaja Sunkara is a sophomore at Santa Fe High. This group of engaged, creative, and inspiring students has already begun to immerse themselves in the collection. They have found inspiration in the many miniatures from across the world, how and why different cultures depict animals, the visual power of Northwest Coast form-line painting and drawing, and points of contact between popular culture - movies, music, toys—and pieces from different places and times.

Read more here.

In case you missed it...

Experience artist Golga Oscar (Yup’ik) as he hosted COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT on October 12, 2021.

Golga Oscar, a Yup’ik artist from Southwest Alaska pursues modern textile work that reflects his cultural identity. He seeks the aspects of revitalizing his ancestral work with a mix of contemporary materials and design. Oscar has been exploring different mediums that range from leather/skin sewing, grass weaving, and walrus ivory/wood carving. A strong cultural identity is evident in his work. Through his knowledge of traditional art forms and sewing skills, he creates cultural attire that becomes a strong visual element in his photographic imagery.

His images portray portraits of Indigenous people to show the world the importance of Native heritage and the validity of their existence. He is striving towards Indigenizing spaces in this Western environment.
COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT a program developed in partnership with First American Art Magazine is an interactive, online monthly experience 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. Watch past Collection Spotlight events, on the Coe Center YouTube channel HERE.

---

**First Fridays!**

First Fridays have returned.

On the first Friday of each month, from 1-4 pm, the Coe Center invites you to experience behind-the-scenes access to over 2,300 works of global Indigenous art. Meet the works of art, staff, and volunteers!

Due to COVID, space is limited.

Please call ahead to register (505) 983-6372.

We, at the Coe, care about your health, and all of us together can protect our community by everyone wearing their mask. Masks and proof of vaccination are required to participate.

---

**The Virtual Coe**

To view past The Virtual Coe issues, please click HERE.

---

Donate today