



Above: Joyce Growing Thunder Fogarty, Assiniboine (Nakota), *Ninja Turtle Buckle*, n.d. Beads and hide, 2.25 x 3 in. (5.7 x 7.6 cm). [NAo855]

*Besides an obvious respect a collector should show towards the grandeur of Plains Indian fully beaded costuming, one should not neglect the more intimate sides of parental relationships in which child fantasy and maternal affection find common ground. When Joyce Growing Thunder mentioned to me that she had made a belt buckle for her little son, Jack, depicting a Ninja Turtle warrior as if caught on a candid camera, I asked to see it—and [was] immediately totally captivated by its charm and crazy sense of fantasy. As Joyce explained it, Jack doesn't feel he is related to Ninja Turtles, he is a Ninja Turtle in every dimension! Eventually, I was able to acquire this badge of child's honor.... It retains a place of honor on my collection shelf!*

—Ralph T. Coe

When I look at this buckle, made by a loving mother for her son, I think of the Tweety Bird beaded braid ties my mom had made for my sister and the Snoopy shawl that was gifted to me by relatives from Oklahoma when we were little. I had a thing for that black-and-white cartoon dog and I carried my stuffed Snoopy doll around with me everywhere. I loved Snoopy and I loved dancing in that shawl. Michelangelo, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle on this buckle, isn't exactly a traditional Native American motif, but the love and attention to the interests of a child that compelled Joyce to make this for her son Jack, certainly is a traditional Indian value.

—Teri Greeves, May 2014

# RALPH T. COE AND HIS FOUNDATION



*All my life I've relied on this measured process of aesthetic absorption, whether the work is a Renaissance plaquette or a Native American wearing blanket. It involves returning over and again to the individual work of art. I revisit and bear constantly in mind the objects of my own collection, however large or small, to gain new insights. They are not trophies but instruments of passion, with the power to unexpectedly reveal mysteries.*

—Ralph T. Coe, 2003

To visit, please call or email for an appointment.

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# “THE OBJECTS ARE ALL STORIES”

**WELCOME** to the Ralph T. Coe Foundation for the Arts. It is an exciting and transformative time as we begin the once-in-a-lifetime building from the ground up the legacy that Ted left us; continuing his life’s work by serving three broad purposes, education, collecting, and connoisseurship. Finding meaning in these purposes and putting those understandings to work is our mission.

Ted’s excitement about collecting came not only from the objects themselves, but the past, present, and even future history behind each object; their stories became part of his story. He engaged and fed his thirst for learning by being open and unafraid to look beyond, to test boundaries. His enthusiasm was, and remains, infectious. He was inclusive and embracing. This is the essence of the Ralph T. Coe Foundation for the Arts.

Ted considered each object a doorway, each object presenting an opportunity to learn to *see—to really see*. Like Ted, the Coe Foundation embraces the expansive view beyond the physical object. Every piece is “unfinished” or part of a larger set of ideas continuously evolving; a never-ending conversation, which flows and ebbs, twists and turns, takes you to places you never imagined, and never ceases.

The Coe Foundation wishes to teach itself and our friends to look *beyond*, not just exploring the everyday meanings of things, but *beyond* to the profound. Our commitment is to create innovation and newness; a space in-between constructed to encourage and connect, using Ted’s own words to “draw us into a circle”.

As our first public venture we ask you to **Join in the Conversation**. It is a call to engage, test emerging assumptions, to look *beyond* and *see*. Ted wanted his collection to be accessible, so that others could also experience the same intimacy one felt when visiting his home and the warmth of his welcoming spirit, and so his collection is the catalyst through which we can open the door.

The Foundation’s object records are filled with Ted’s words of appreciation, collecting, and life. We begin by sharing just a few of these stories. We also asked our Advisory Committee members to share their thoughts from their personal and/or professional perspective regarding the very same objects. Their words amplify and expand Ted’s stories, adding new layers of meaning and understanding. It is a never-ending story and we ask that you to join us. Let the conversation proceed...

—Rachel de W. Wixom, *President, Executive Director*  
—Bruce Bernstein, Ph.D., *Curator*  
with the Board of Directors and Advisory Committee



Ralph T. Coe, early 2000.

**RALPH T. COE**, known as Ted to his family and friends, was not only an early champion of North American Native Art, but also one of the foremost authorities in the field. His interests were vast and he felt if one sincerely took the time to look at objects, they would “draw us into the circle.” His passion for knowledge is evident in the varied collections he left behind along with his vision and legacy by creating this foundation.

In 1976, Coe curated the groundbreaking exhibition *Sacred Circles: 2,000 Years of North American Art* at the Hayward Gallery in London and later at the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. *Sacred Circles* focused visitors on the aesthetic pleasures and beauty of Native art, replacing the prevailing ethnographic museum viewpoint of the day. He went on to curate *Lost and Found Traditions: Native American Art, 1965-1985*;

opening in 1986 and organized by The American Federation of Arts, the exhibition travelled extensively around the United States. In 2003, Coe’s last exhibition *The Responsive Eye: Ralph T. Coe and the Collecting of American Indian Art* opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Over his lifetime Coe’s collecting reflected his appreciation of beauty, history, and culture—finding it in the most functional to elaborate objects. He remained innately focused on education; creating a continuing legacy embracing worlds not always known or understood by present generations for future generations to respond to. The Ralph T. Coe Foundation is dedicated to continuing this legacy and the mindful appreciation of the world’s indigenous arts.



Nancy Samson, *Cree, Moccasins*, c. 1988. Beads and hide, 10.7 x 4 in. (9.3 x 10.1 cm). [NA0381]

*Anybody knows who travels the Canadian pow-wow circuit that the railroad town of Hobbema, Alberta, is importantly Indian because three separate bands of Plains Cree Indians surround the town and basically meet at its center. To cut time short, I inquired in downtown Hobbema where I could find an available Cree traditional craftsperson, and was given some rather complicated directions to a farm owned by Nancy Samson whose family had founded the Samson Cree band. I found a shy, reserved Cree elder who was extremely polite but also a little wary of this stranger in her midst. She maintained a shop on the side of her house where there were moccasins of varying grades and some of them almost of commercial grade. I asked her if she had, by any chance something finer, and she reached over and said, “I made these.” What she had made was exactly what I was praying for. They are not only traditional but also quite modern in the combination of what I call a “flame-*

*like” design on the vamp with upward similar devices compensating on the cuffs which are integral with the whole body of the moccasin, but the coloration is quite daring; its black background and gray, green, yellow, red, and orange zones of design, which cascade seemingly all over the moccasin. She was reluctant to sell them unless I met her price, which I did immediately. Then I asked if I could photograph her, would she mind? and I explained to*

her the project that I had been engaged upon, which was the Lost and Found Traditions exhibition, which was still on tour. This only served to frighten her and she very reluctantly agreed that I could photograph if didn't put her image into "some book." I have kept the photograph of her holding up the moccasins but have not made use of it.

—Ralph T. Coe

The "traditional but also quite modern" design on these moccasins was so popular in the 1980's, it can be found on beaded shoes from that time (and probably into today) as far south as the Eastern Shoshone in Wyoming and the Bannock in Idaho. I have seen variations of this design on numerous moccasins, and like Ted, am always inspired by the "daring" color palates that are used.

My mother says, back when she had her trading post, that one of her best bead workers told her that the way she came up with new colors for her designs was to flip through fashion magazines to see the latest trends. That way, "the White ladies would want to buy her work".

—Teri Greeves, May 2014



Yup'ik, Bentwood Bucket, late 19th c. Wood, ivory, hide thong, and spruce root, 7.5 x 9.2 in. (19 x 23.5 cm). [NA1021]

In the scrub and riverine areas of the Kuskokwim, Yukon Delta area, wild berries became abundant in the very short late summer and early autumn. Bentwood containers such as this one made from thick strips of wood and shaped by hot water or steam were used to pick these berries and transport them. This one, typically, has a red stain still remaining in the incised lines that enliven the outer body of the bucket which has more of the stain spread along the surface due to exposure and use. The elegant, flat handle is suspended for carrying from two pierced side attachments made from the same fossil ivory as the handle. Hide thongs allow the bucket to move up and down as the user carried it by the handle. Every feature of this container including its lightweight and compactness facilitates ease in movement while berry picking. All elements are tightly fitted together not only by spruce lacing, but by whittling joints to fit one another as tightly

as a drum. The bottom is carved from a single piece of wood and snapped into place so tightly that only one side required lacing. Although some of these containers have small religious or votive symbols painted, this one seems to have been unadorned. The finished bucket is a tour-de-force of reciprocal contour carving, whittling, and subtle joinery. These buckets were used to pick berries. For a similar example from Saint Michel is illustrated and discussed in Dorothy Jean Ray, "A Legacy of Arctic Art" University of Washington Press, 1996, fig. 39 p. 81.

—Ralph T. Coe

As Ted Coe states in the catalog record for this bucket, it is "a tour-de-force of reciprocal contour carving, whittling, and subtle joinery." —the melding of the finest craftsmanship, art and function. To make such a bucket requires a deep and intimate knowledge of the landscape and the subtle properties of materials gained over generations of living in this treeless area of Alaska. As Yup'ik elders explain, they have many names for the driftwood they use, wood that washes down the rivers to the Kuskokwim Delta and coastal beaches. These names depend on the type and part of the tree, its particular properties, use, and many more distinctions. The sides of buckets and bowls are generally made of what translates from the Yup'ik as "mixed grain" wood, a type that has both strength and pliability, while the base is carved from a tree stump, a wood that has strength, but is not pliable. The end of the wood that from the sides is

expertly sewn with spruce root, material that swells when wet helping to make these buckets watertight. These buckets, along with many other essential items, are made during the winter in the men's house, or qasgi. There, the heat and steam help soften the wood for shaping, with the heat setting any applied pigments.

—Landis Smith, May 2014



David Boxley, Tsimshian, Carved Cane, c. 1978. Wood and paint, 35 x 1 x 6.12 in. Ralph T. Coe Foundation for the Arts, Inc. [NA0200]

Carved canes became special presentation items among Northwest Coast carvers after the advent of the white man but were also carved for trading purposes. The latter is the case with Boxley's beautifully carved cane. The program is highly original since it features totemic animals coupled with their human counterparts. The handle is an eagle and eagle person followed by 2) halibut and halibut person, 3) salmon and salmon woman, 4), wolf and wolf's personification, and 5) raven and raven person.

In 1970, if I recall this correctly, I was on my third excursion up the Northwest Coast on an Alaskan State Ferry; I got off the boat at Sitka, Juno, and Ketchikan on my way down the inland waterway of the Alaskan panhandle. It was a marvelous trip during which time was not important because you could always catch another of these ferryboat taxis. Since that time there is such an increase in travel on the part of excursionist not only from America, but also Europe and gods knows where else that you can hardly book a passage

unless it is done well in advance. My travel partner on this trip was the young art critic for the Kansas City Star, the only curious and talented and well educated art critic that the Kansas City Star employed during my long tenure at the Nelson Gallery. He was willing to "go with the flow" which was definitely my style of traveling, this was the only way to ensure that you could really experience the catch-

as-catch-can opportunities for Northwest Coast Indian cultural adventures which you had to adapt while the Indians did not need to adapt to you. Finally, the ferry on its return stopped off in Ketchikan. I was able to get a hold of Dolores Churchill, the gifted daughter of Selena Peratrovich, a Haida doyen of basketry and Haida culture in all its aspects. I was able to engage Selena as a demonstrator at the American showing of the Sacred Circles, accompanying her was her daughter Dolores who has since succeeded her mother in prominence as a basketry artist and cultural caretaker of the Haida people. I am lucky enough to possess several works by both mother and daughter. I got in touch with Delores by hailing a cab in Ketchikan and getting the driver to call her since she was a taxi dispatcher. So I was able to renew my connection with her. It was Delores who told me to look up a curio shop in downtown Ketchikan, I can not remember the name of it; what I do remember is seeing through the window a walking stick that immediately attracted my attention. I entered, bought it for approximately \$450, which was quite a chunk out of my allotted travel budget. It was worth it!

What made me buy this piece? The answer is plain and up front, the progression of imagery is absolutely classic Tsimshian style and I wondered who could have learned it so aptly. This is particularly true of the facial imagery the faces are very similar in style to each other and have the high cheekbones and wide plain foreheads that signal the traditional rendering of features on classic Tsimshian poles. It is basically an adaptation of a miniature pole rethought in terms of a delicate reduction of a prestige walking stick. Though of wood, it has a refinement of scale and a delicate rhythmic lines associated with an elegance that is truly Tsimshian in style. Rather than volumetric in style as we see in Haida carvings, this piece had a compact alignment of detail that yelled at me right through the window.



*The Gallery, Ralph T. Coe's home in Santa Fe, c. 2010.*

*Little wonder that in David Boxley's subsequent proficient career has achieved a delicate poetic style all his own and versatility in carving, song and dance as well as a prominent educator, ceremonialist, and a multi-tasking culturist whose influence goes far beyond the ordinary commitments of being a technician.*

—Ralph T. Coe

I selected this cane because it was carved and painted by David Boxley, an artist and community leader that I admire very much. I asked David about the cane and he said he made a number of them, as well as model totem poles early in his career as an artist, having left his previous work as schoolteacher and basketball coach. He says Yellow Cedar is the best wood for carving and that this cane was probably made of the same.

David talks about the missionaries having been very successful among his people to the point that much of Tsimshian heritage had been abandoned and forgotten. This was especially true in his village of Metlakatla, which had been founded by missionaries. But thanks to the culture and language passed on to him by his grandparents, David was inspired to bring Tsimshian cultural traditions and language, including the potlatch, back to his community, an awesome accomplishment. In addition, his superb dance group, the Git-Hoan dancers perform not only at home but bring Tsimshian culture to other places including Santa Fe Indian Market in 2010 and 2011. They are always a huge hit, with clacking raven masks and dramatic transformation masks that David and his equally talented son carve and paint. David and son have carved many full-sized totem poles, including one that was fairly recently raised inside the National Museum of the American Indian atrium.

As a museum conservator, it is interesting to me that David has described older museum collections as elders, teaching him to carve and paint masks, bentwood boxes, totem poles, and other items in classic Tsimshian style, with great beauty and depth. When David came to the Smithsonian to work with us on a project, he used to say he'd like to back a truck up to the museum with his wood and tools and just carve his way through the collections, learning all he could. For me, this is the most dynamic role a museum can play—the revitalization and inspiration for arts and culture. It's good to know that the Coe Foundation is interested in serving in this way.

—Landis Smith, May 2014



Bill Reid, Haida, *Pin Medallion*, 1954. Northwest Coast. Sterling Silver, Diam. 1.9 in. (4.8 cm). [NA0175]



Josephine Assinwie, Ottawa, *Birchbark Tea Set*, 1992. Great Lakes. Birchbark, quill, and thread. Ralph T. Coe Foundation for the Arts, Inc. [NA0273]

*Bill Reid, the extremely versatile artist who worked in every possible modern and old Northwest Coast artistic media, had become so famous by the late 1980s and early 1990s, that I abandoned any idea of being able to afford an example of his work, except for prints, which I have not collected. To my surprise, in 1990, Leona Lattimer*

*pointed out to me a small silver pin medallion Bill Reid had made in 1954. While modest in size, its delicate and exacting workmanship reveals an artistry of the first order as well as an acute understanding of the form-line inter-relationships that Bill Holm was later to codify in his famous study outlining the principles of Northwest Coast Indian art. This treatise unlocked for a whole new generation of Northwest Coast Indian artists the whole subsequent widespread renaissance in Northwest Coast Indian arts. But there were earlier artists who turned the keys in the lock for themselves as well as a few who had retained some of the old canons by instinct. Among these, Bill Reid was able to incorporate the entire Northwest Coast zeitgeist into his previous art training. This pin shows not only that talent, but also, that at the time of its making, he was still somewhat dependent on literal precedents he had studied by the old masters of Northwest Coast carving. I was extraordinarily lucky when Leona Lattimer offered to see if I could take the pin over to Bill Reid's Vancouver apartment, where he was in residence. She called his wife, Martine, who agreed to have me pay a visit on the same afternoon I purchased this medallion, since Bill Reid's Parkinsonism was under good control that day. I took an elevator up to the apartment and she graciously ushered me into the living room. There, by the window overlooking the expanse of Vancouver's harbor, sat Bill Reid partially swathed in a comfortable blanket across his lap. We had a pleasant discussion, which centered about his admiration for Flemish, small scale carvings made from nuts depicting scenes of the Nativity and other religious scenes. I happen to have collected Northern renaissance wooden portrait medallions and was familiar with such carvings and expressed a co-admiration and told him I would send him a photograph of the very fine example in the medieval collections of the Cleveland Museum, the city of my birth, which I did. Somehow, I could totally coalesce in my own mind Bill Reid's own small models for monumental projects carved in fruit wood with Medieval medallions, which in turn, in another media that of silver, seemed to display a similar kinship. Bill informed me that this medallion was adapted from an argillite plate depicting a wolf carved by the Haida artist, Tom Price, one of these older masters. Somehow, a synthesis passed between us concerning my newly acquired pin, Haida argillite carvings, and the northern Renaissance of Europe. I've never gotten over that short, but revelatory interview. When I walked out again on the street, I could hardly see straight. I have searched through the literature trying to find the argillite plate source for this early pin medallion of Bill Reid, but it has so far eluded me. I have yet to find it in any of the Canadian ethnological museums, nor have I seen it crop up in the literature on argillite carving. Perhaps someday, it will reveal itself. Though Bill Reid went on to greater mastery and much larger scale projects than this little piece to be held in the hand, it has continued to mean a great deal to me.*

—Ralph T. Coe

*A very deft version of a long-standing Ottawa tourist item there is an ironic appeal to these pieces that can never really be used—a true survival of a Victorian knickknack. The lid of the teapot was a replacement kindly provided by George Wigle and the maker, since the original was damaged.*

—Ralph T. Coe

In considering these two pieces side by side, I am immediately struck by the amazing parallels between them and more importantly, I am inspired to compare and contrast them, regardless of their opposite coast origins. What I draw out from this inter-object dialogue is the incredible adaptability of Native art traditions over time. It reminds me of a very succinct quote by the modern Haida master, Robert Davidson who said,

*“We are now giving new meaning to the songs, dances, crests and philosophies. We are updating these ideas, which is no different from what our forefathers did.”* On one piece, I see traditional designs being applied to new materials; on the other, I see traditional materials being manipulated for new forms. Can you tell which is which? Are the concepts interchangeable? As we continue to explore the Ralph T. Coe Foundation's collection, in which of these tracts do other objects land—do they bare old designs in new mediums or are they old materials repurposed for new designs? Perhaps it is not so black and white?

—Vanessa Elmore, May 2014



Joyce Growing Thunder Fogarty, Assiniboine (Nakota), *White Man's Indian Watch*, 1984-5. Plains. Beads, buckskin, 1.5 x 10.5 in. (3.81 x 26.67 cm). [NA0451c]

*Jim and Joyce both felt that I needed a more stylish way of presenting myself for Indian affairs: "You really ought to look right." First I was sent the beaded buffalo belt buckle, in the next year (1985) I was told that I spent much too much time looking at my watch and clocks "very whitey" and the solution to that was to give me a watch, beaded in Indian style, but which had only a blank dial. The idea for this send-up originated soon after Joyce learned I had moved to Santa Fe. Jim telephoned, "since you are going to become a real westerner, Joyce is beading you a watch to keep with you. It will be elegant, she says, but it will have no hands and no face." For a long time I never heard about the watch and one*

*day in a telephone conversation I asked how it was coming along. Jim said, "Oh, Juanita's been wearing that, she has it now down at the movies."*

*"Can you send it to me so that it arrives tomorrow," I countered, "because we want to illustrate it in the catalogue to Lost and Found Traditions, it makes a point about us whiteys." The watch duly arrived and was illustrated on page 37. It became part of the white man's outfit when I wore it to the opening of Lost and Found Traditions at the American Museum of Natural History in 1986 and subsequently when wearing the outfit, I was to select any medallion that I wanted to wear with a dark turtleneck sweater and the Levi Jacket and beaded belt buckle. The original quilled medallion was traded by Joyce for the coat cited in NAO450c. In recent years, I have ceased to wear this outfit, because I don't want to damage it. Juanita has already identically replaced the corduroy collar once. We made a trip to the Hobby Lobby in Albuquerque for the material, which is the way Indians operate in real life. I write this because of the way Indian life is associated with "new age" pap or pseudo spirituality. That repair trip to the Hobby Lobby was real!*

*To me, this outfit retained a western elegance and a dressy informality together with a sly reference to Indianness that allowed me to wear it with no embarrassment. To my astonishment, my caregiver (wingman) Ray Davis found in perusing the Internet a reference to this particular watch and a drawing of it in Hope B. Werness book, The Continuum Encyclopedia of Native Art. One never knows when the Lost and Found Traditions re-surface, since its publication in 1986. From a serious joke and its presentation as a spur to go on Indian time rather than "whities" time, it has gained an unexpected currency as an object of time!*

—Ralph T. Coe

#### "Ted's Favorite Watch"

Ted was a dear friend and as all will tell you he was a passionate collector whose art covered every inch of his house, yes, even the ceilings. When he did not have room for his latest acquisition, I believe I remember a ledger painting by Darryl Growing Thunder, which he put on the ceiling. The object I most associate Ted with, however, is made by Darryl's mother Joyce Growing Thunder Fogarty, a beader. It is a beaded wristband with a watch without face or hands. Ted wore it so often, probably as much to shock those he would encounter as it was to remind him of the Native Americans he had grown so close to over so many years. One can buy watchbands in which to place a time-piece, but in this case that was not the idea.

The reference is to the concept of "Indian Time". Native Americans do not think of time as Anglos do. What are important to them are the seasons, not the hours. My introduction to this was early on in our interest in Native America. We were on Second Mesa at Hopi and going with friends to a home from which we would have a first class view of the Dance that afternoon which was "scheduled" for 2 pm. Every 15 minutes I was asking, "when will it start". "They will come, they will come," I was told. Sure enough they did come at 4pm!

It hit home for Ted when at the height of the American Indian Movement (AIM), he had arranged to have two of the top people in AIM to be interviewed on one of the Morning shows in New York, and they did not show up on the designated day at 7AM. Instead, they came at 7AM the next day. Needless to say, Ted was rather upset but the response from the two Natives was, "Yesterday, today, what's the difference?" This watch symbolizes all his "Indian Time" experiences!

—Gerald Stiebel



Artist Unknown, Zuni, *Deer Katsina*, c. 1950-60. Southwest. Wood, yarn, pigment, feathers, 15 x 5 in. (38.1 x 12.7 cm). [NA0938]

*This Katsina carving of a deer or antelope dancer may be Zuni. It is not Hopi. Horns are tape-wrapped and the rest of the attire better suits a Zuni interpretation of this figure.*

—Martha Struever,  
American Indian art dealer and author

*This popular Katsina has power of the over rain and brings the increase of deer for hunting. The deer dancer is usually followed by a wolf or mountain lion Katsina.*

—Ralph T. Coe

As a collector of Katsina figures, I chose this object from the collection to illuminate the complexity involved with the identification and authentication of these types of objects. The Hopi, Zuni, and each of the Rio Grande Pueblos have their own unique pantheon of Katsina figures, dances, and rituals in which they participate. Some overlap and some are entirely unique to their individual pueblo.

As someone looking from the outside in, I must rely on a study of materials, form, carving techniques, and the intricate details of the painted mask and accoutrement to make an informative identification. This particular figure is identified as a Deer Katsina produced at Zuni. What characteristics support this identification? Are the materials typical of Zuni? Most Zuni figures were created in pine; the Hopi and Rio Grande Pueblos favored cottonwood root. Are the designs Zuni or more specifically is the Katsina representing one that would be seen at Zuni? This figure has physical clothing made of a variety of material including yarn, cloth, and even tape—is that too a characteristic of Zuni? I would suggest that this figure was made at Hopi and that it represents a uniquely Hopi Katsina. But it could be argued that it is a representation of a Hopi Katsina carved by either a Zuni artist or perhaps even by a Navajo artist. It is not apparent if Coe made an argument either way and should we assume that he followed the suggestion of notable dealer, Martha Struever, in labeling the Katsina as Zuni in his collection? There is a real opportunity here to add information and details to further our collective knowledge of this particular object type.

—Paul Elmore, May 2014