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Explorer: Muheb Esmat sees Museum open Doors to History

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A newly established fund to expand K-12 education is already helping the Colby College Museum of Art have an impact on the lives of Maine schoolchildren.

The Linde/Packman Fund for Museum Outreach and Education, established by Karen Linde Packman '88, chair of the Colby College Museum of Art Board of Governors, and Trustee Jeffrey N. Packman '88, expands and deepens the museum's K-12 programming and reflects the commitment of the museum to young people in Maine, said Carolyn Muzzy Director of the Colby College Museum of Art and Chief Curator Sharon Corwin. "I think we are in a position to really transform their lives through the arts education that we can offer," Corwin said.

The endowed fund will allow the museum to continue and augment its current educational outreach, including K-12 tours and lunches, art-making workshops, family events, and a summer arts camp. Additional programs include training of area schoolteachers and design workshops. Overseeing these efforts will be Margaret Aiken, the first Linde Family Foundation Coordinator of School and Teacher Programs.

Aiken's experience and abilities in this area will be key to making the museum programs relevant and accessible, Corwin said. "We were able to bring a real leader in the field onto our team at Colby."

Margaret Aiken was photographed in the Colby College Museum of Art, William D. Adams Gallery. In the background is the Peter Soriano work, Permanent Maintenance, 2015 (detail), spray paint and acrylic on wall, dimensions variable. It is a museum purchase from the Jere Abbott Acquisition Fund.



Explorer

Mubeb Esmat sees museum open doors to history

Mubeb Esmat '17

Mubeb Esmat '17 made a significant discovery when he came to Colby. Actually, he made more than one.

Esmat arrived on Mayflower Hill from Kabul, Afghanistan, by way of Massachusetts (four years at Deerfield Academy) and Jordan (a postgraduate year at King's Academy) and decided to explore. He took geology, psychology, English, and, in the same spirit of exploration, his first foray into art history, a class on East Asian art with Professor of Art Ankeney Weitz. He had loved the architecture classes he took in high school, and now it occurred to him that architecture and art could go together. "This," he said, "is something I would be able to do for the rest of my life."

Esmat was off and running, to the Colby College Museum of Art, a resource he describes as a treasure. "I have classes where I have written papers about pieces that are in the museum," Esmat said. "That is a different feeling than writing about something that you only see on a website or you only get to see in a book."

In his sophomore year Esmat declared art history his major. As part of a Jan Plan with Weitz, he curated an art exhibition, visiting the studios of artists who had immigrated to Maine from Taiwan and China and selecting works to show at Waterville's Common Street Arts gallery. Last summer Esmat became a Mellon Research Assistant, working with the art museum's Curator of Academic Programs Shalini Le Gall. One of his tasks was to help set up the Davis Curricular Gallery, which features art chosen by faculty members and museum staff that will be used for class work.

Esmat also assisted Le Gall in discovering not only the provenance of a piece of art that had been donated to the museum decades before, but the historical context in which it had been created, an absorbing and compelling project that required considerable art detective work.

—Pat Sims

For the solution to Esmat's art mystery and more, go to colby.edu/mag 