

CRAFT QUARTERLY



James Renwick Alliance

FALL 2020



OUR NEW EDITOR



It is with great joy that I join you as the editor of Craft Quarterly.

We are publishing this edition at one of the most difficult points in our country's existence—and less than a month away from the 2020 presidential election. With so much at stake, my vision for its contents is to look at subjects like American history, race, equity, women's studies, health disparities and life during the pandemic through the lens of craft.

My hope is that this magazine will anchor us in a familiar field—craft art—and spark discussions that go much deeper than that. We need each other right now, and these pages are one way to connect us.

Jennifer Anne Mitchell

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Seven months into the COVID-19 pandemic, we are delighted bring to you an ambitious Quarterly that includes more diverse voices and perspectives. Led by our new editor Jennifer Anne Mitchell, it's our intention to spotlight how craft artists and institutions are innovating and responding to all the disruption that the pandemic has wrought.

It has been a distinct honor to lead the JRA for the past two years during some turbulent events, both for the field of American craft and for our country. Our relationship with the Renwick Gallery is very strong as we plan for our 40th Anniversary and the Renwick plans its 50th Anniversary, both in 2022. I am deeply grateful to Stephanie Stebich, director of the SAAM, and to Nora Atkinson, curator-in-charge at the Renwick, for all of their collaboration, fearless leadership, and friendship.

The JRA is in exceptionally good hands with J.G. Harrington, my successor.

Thank you for all of your support of the JRA and engagement with me during my presidency. I look forward to seeing what comes next and continuing to champion the craft field that we all love.

Stay safe, and please let your voice be heard. VOTE in the upcoming elections.

Warmest wishes,

Michele A. Manatt

ABOUT THE JRA

The JRA Craft Quarterly is published three times a year by the James Renwick Alliance, an independent national non-profit organization that celebrates and advances American craft and craft artists by fostering education, connoisseurship and public appreciation.

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- Diane Charnov, Jaimianne Jacobin, Michele A. Manatt

Although significant efforts have been made to eliminate errors of fact, the editor apologizes in advance for any errors that may remain.

JAMES RENWICK ALLIANCE

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"To Disarm: Freedom Rider (Carol Silver from New York, New York)" by Philadelphia-based ceramic artist Roberto Lugo. Featured artwork from the JRA Craft Weekend auction.

Cover: "Freedom Quilt" created in 1975 by Jessie B. Telfair. Collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Gift of Virginia Dwan.



STATE OF THE ARTS

10 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE VIRTUAL CRAFT WORLD

By Diane Charnov

Independent arts writer, JRA board member and 2019 Jentel Critic at the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts

In the 16th century, wonders of the world filled ornate cases in aristocratic homes. From fossils to narwhal tusks, from antiquities to automatons, objects drew visitors into "Wunderkammers," or "Cabinets of Curiosities," now recognized as precursors to modern museums. Fast forward to the 21st century where the novel coronavirus wreaks unprecedented devastation and impacts how people experience art. Now, a new portal into the art world has taken hold in the form of Zoom and similar video conference software. Despite countless cancellations in the craft world, a vibrant experience exists online.

In this virtual world, the craft-curious can cross time zones and grab a front row seat to meet makers, converse with curators and attend virtual tours. Below are 10 highlights from over 75 virtual events attended online since the pandemic struck.

American Craft Council - Superb events exploring the world of craft, many hosted by Hrag Vartanian (editor-in-chief of the arts magazine *Hyperallergic*) that often drew

over 500 visitors. "Maker Meetups" and "Inside Artist Studio Visits" with time-lapse videos of metalsmiths, felt artists and artists of all mediums are part of the ACC's efforts to keep craft alive and well.

Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center - Insightful conversation with author Marilyn Chase on renowned artist Ruth Asawa. Asawa's sculptural weavings, childhood in World War II internment camps and experiences at Black Mountain College create a fascinating backdrop to the recent book, "Everything She Touched: The Life of Ruth Asawa." For your next letter, check out the Asawa stamp series recently released by the U.S. Postal Service.

Center for Craft - Offers a wide array of opportunities to stay connected to craft, includes in-person timed visits and craft fellows online gallery shows. The most recent, *The Computer Pays Its Debt: Women, Textiles, and Technology, 1965-1985* examines the remarkable role of women weavers and the Apollo 11 moon mission.

Cranbrook Academy of Art - Curator Kevin Adkisson leads engaging online tours from one

of America's premier art academies. Cranbrook's graduates include many known to the JRA, from metalsmith Vivan Beer to artist Nancy Blum. Topics span Eliel Saarinen's architecture to Harry Bertioia's furniture, and feature students in their studios.

Friedman Benda - Glenn Adamson, craft scholar from Yale University and former director of New York's Museum of Arts and Design hosts "Design in Dialogue," a series in collaboration with the Friedman Benda gallery. He recently spotlighted innovative Australian craft and connections to Indigenous makers. His conversation with curators at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in Melbourne, Australia included a sneak preview of new acquisitions for the *NGV Triennial*.

Everson Museum of Art - The innovative curator of ceramics Garth Johnson conducts a series of in-depth interviews with artists and tours of the museum collection, including the descent of an endoscope down the interior of a ceramic vessel to highlight the properties of porcelain.

James Renwick Alliance - The JRA brings many of its craft connections online, from its "Coffee & Conversation" series, including a talk with the new Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery Curator of Craft Mary Savig, to the recent virtual craft Philadelphia tour to the upcoming Craft Weekend from Oct. 24 to Oct. 25.

Katzen Arts Center - Museum director Jack Rasmussen hosted an online discussion with the curators of *Gods & Monsters: Works by Viola Frey* whose monumental ceramic sculpture, "Lady in Blue and Yellow Dress," has been a favorite at the Renwick Gallery. Stay tuned for JRA member and renowned artist Rhoda Baer's one-person show of glass sculptures at the Katzen at American University in 2021.

Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) - Hosted an evening with innovative design artist Neri Oxman, the founding director of the MIT Media Lab and a MacArthur Fellow. Her MOMA show *Material Ecology* (through Oct. 18) combines technology and design in stunning ways

National Gallery of Art - The film "Ursula von Rydingsvard: Into Her Own," shared through the National Gallery of Art, highlights Rydingsvard's monumental wood sculptures that were the subject

of the National Museum of Women in the Arts show *The Contour of Feeling*.

Dozens of other craft events are online weekly. Of special note are glass artist Nancy Callan's recent conversation with Katya Heller, the director of Heller Gallery in New York City; Philadelphia's Center for Art in Wood's well-attended online events; the September conversation on the history and future of frameworking with world-famous glass artists Shane Fero and Paul Stankard hosted by WheatonArts in Millville, New Jersey; and an online rendition of Penland School of Craft's annual benefit auction. There are also numerous classes to stay connected to making, whether through Maryland's Pyramid Atlantic Art Center, Washington, DC's District Clay Center, Chicago's Lillstreet Art Center or Colorado's Anderson Ranch Arts Center.

While craft is typically a sensory and 3-D experience, from the heated glow of a glass studio's glory hole to the hypnotic motion of clay on a potter's wheel, opportunities currently abound to remain meaningfully engaged online. All that is needed is a computer, the internet and a comfortable chair to open this modern-day cabinet of craft curiosities.



"Sarah Haskell weaving on a computer aided loom," Family Computing Magazine, Nov 1983. Photo by Flint Born. © Courtesy of The Center for Craft.

Page 4: "Shadowfield/ Colored Light # 5" by 2020 Distinguished Educator Warren Seelig. Featured artwork from the JRA Craft Weekend auction.

CRAFT IN ACTION

ARTISTS CREATE COVID-19 FACE MASKS FOR FRONTLINE AND ESSENTIAL WORKERS

By Caroline Kipp
Curator of contemporary art at The
George Washington University Museum
and The Textile Museum, and JRA board
member

Since April 2020, the U.S. Center for Disease Control has asked the general public to wear face masks to help curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Combined with a lack of available medical-grade personal protective equipment, this has given rise to a mass movement of cloth mask making. Undoubtedly, we are witnessing a not just a seminal moment in the history of the world but in the history of craft in the 21st century. While the public has been called on to lend material support for past moments of need, there has never been such a resurgence of the value of hand skills as being so clearly essential. Across the nation, sewing machines have sold out at major retailers, and The New York Times is publishing guides on fabric types and mask patterns. Textiles have become a major talking point, with quilting guilds, fab labs, maker spaces, crafters and makers of all forms—even people who are just learning to sew for the first time—joining the efforts to protect their communities and fellow citizens.

Artists in particular have jumped into the fray, and have proved particularly adept at adjusting to the new situation and taking ownership. Being proficient at manipulating material, their natural inclinations and learned skills have made them vital to this moment. Individual artists that many of us know of and admire such as Stephanie Syjuco, Beth Lipman, Ken Sager, Rowland Ricketts, Aram Han Sifuentes, Erica Lynn Hood and Ai Kijima, are just a handful who have pivoted their studio practices to making masks for frontline and essential workers. Although made by notable artists, most insist that these are not artworks in and of themselves. But where does studio work end and social practice begin? What is this, if not the expanded field of craft in action? Without getting into the issues surrounding the term and label craftivism, is this not, in its essence, exactly that? Stephanie Syjuco is well aware of this murky water, and so while many of her early masks were made from her iconic chroma key green material (you may remember her work on view at the *Disrupting Craft: Renwick Invitational 2018*) she is adamantly refusing to sell them and has instead focused on distribution to frontline workers within her immediate vicinity

in the Bay Area. This focus on community and place is a theme that has arisen through the course of this pandemic as we realize how vital they are to how we live.

Small businesses and organizations have also reasserted their role as hubs within their communities. They tend to be closely connected to the communities they are based in, and the networks they've formed have proved more adaptable, and thus responsive, to a shifting landscape. In Baltimore, Christina Brunyate's Domesticity Fabric Shop and Sewing Studio has provided innumerable support to the community. It is not hyperbole to say Domesticity has coordinated a small army, aptly named the "Maskateers." They have collectively made and

donated over 16,000 fabric masks. Now, when the demand has dwindled, the collective is switching to making child-sized masks, and scrub caps for medical workers. A subset of the website is dedicated to these community-led efforts. It features free, downloadable patterns; tutorials; explanations of which mask patterns are approved for different Maryland institutions; opportunities for individuals to sign up to be a Maskateer, or to request masks be made and given to a specific organization; a place to donate money to the making cause; donation drop-off information; a robust Q&A section; and a compiling of mask making materials. Even as recently as late August, the Domesticity group is coordinating donations of masks to local food banks.

What all these individuals and organizations have in common is the questioning and recentralizing of how their resources can be useful in this moment. They are willing, able and inclined to be flexible and self-directed. By embracing and embodying their values and circle of influence, they inspire others to do the same. This self-ownership is catching, step-in-step with the coronavirus, and it does genuinely make one wonder if, perhaps,



Sewing workstation at Syjuco's home office, showing mask prototypes and materials, March 2020. Courtesy of Stephanie Syjuco.

Below: Sets of sewn masks ready for donation. Photos courtesy the artist.

this time, we will remember all the lessons we've learned "after this is over." If only we could compose a thank you letter to everyone who has been of service to their community. That there are too many to name, to celebrate, is something to be deeply thankful for. For all the terrible, awful, no good that 2020 has presented the country, there are more than silver linings. There are solid gold examples of compassion, community and a willingness to step up and assert that craft is vital, central and of service.



DOCUMENTING HISTORY



ARTIST AMOS PAUL KENNEDY JR. EXPLAINS HIS PROJECT "THE DESEGREGATION OF ARLINGTON LUNCH COUNTERS"

By Jim Byers
Marketing director of Arlington Cultural Affairs

Over the last six and a half months, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged our creative communities and disrupted age-old traditions of how we engage with arts and culture. It also has presented new opportunities. Such was the case on July 17 when the James Renwick Alliance and Arlington Arts partnered to host a virtual "Coffee & Conversation" with Arlington Public Art's visiting artist Amos Paul Kennedy Jr.

Kennedy is an American printer, book artist and papermaker best known for social and political commentary, particularly in printed posters. Kennedy creates prints, posters and postcards from handset wood and metal type, oil-based inks and eco-friendly, affordable chipboard. The Economist noted that Kennedy was "unafraid of asking uncomfortable questions about race and artistic pretension."

From an early age, Kennedy was interested in letters and books and studied calligraphy for several years. At the age of 40, he visited Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia and was mesmerized by an 18th-century print shop and book bindery demonstration. He began studying printing at a community-based letterpress shop in Chicago and, within a year, quit his AT&T systems analyst job of two decades. He continued his printmaking studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison under legendary book designer Walter Hamady. Earning his MFA in 1997, Kennedy subsequently taught graphic design at the Henry Radford Hope School of Fine Arts at Indiana University. In 2015, Kennedy was honored as a United States

8 Artists Glasgow Fellow in Crafts and received a \$50,000 unrestricted prize.

Arlington Cultural Affairs, a division of Arlington Economic Development, delivers public activities and programs as Arlington Arts. By creating, supporting, and promoting the arts, this initiative connects artists and community to reflect the diversity of Arlington. For the last two years, Arlington Arts has been collaborating with the county's historic preservation program and center for local history to commemorate Arlington's civil rights history. Our focus is the 60th anniversary of the desegregation of Stratford Junior High School in 2019 and the 60th anniversary of the lunch counter sit-ins that occurred in June of this year. We have been working with Kennedy to bring attention to the places and events that are often overlooked in our collective memory of Arlington.

"Arlington is still a very transient community, so people don't necessarily know the history of what happened before," commented Joan Mulholland, a nationally known civil rights activist, Freedom Rider, and Arlington sit-ins participant, during the Zoom "Coffee & Conversation" chat.

Since 2018, Kennedy has been visiting Arlington to meet community members, research history and create letterpress prints in response to his discoveries. He has prompted community members to make their own prints at events and festivals throughout the county. The program's intention is for every person living and working in Arlington to receive or encounter one of Kennedy's prints to prompt their rediscovery of this part of the county's history. Before the onset of the coronavirus, Kennedy's prints were available for free in the lobby

at the Ellen M. Bozman Government Center, the seat of county government. This spring, a set of his original prints was installed on an Arlington Transit (ART) bus as part of its "Art on the ART" program.

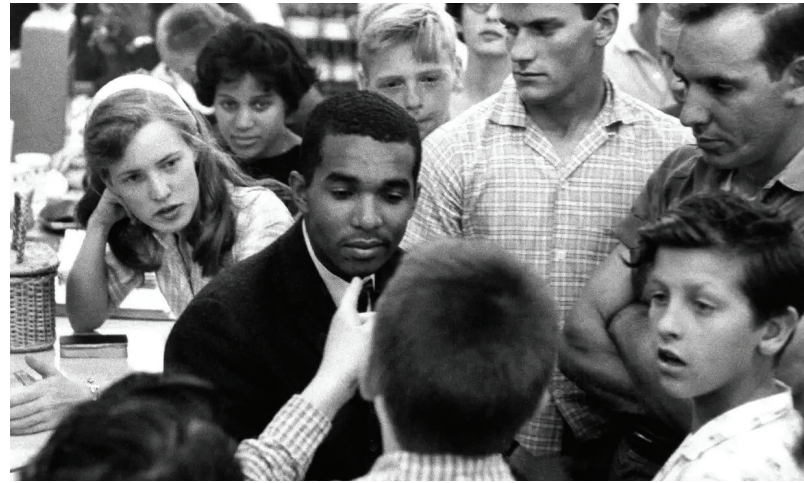
"Taking something from an idea to a concept enriches us," Kennedy says. "The art carries a little piece of your experience. I want everyone to experience a little bit of that."

While in-person interactions are now being reimaged for 2021, the virtual "Coffee & Conversation" offered an opportunity for Kennedy to engage with nearly 100 registered participants from across the country to discuss the project and the historic protests that challenged widespread segregation policies and resulted in change.

Mulholland shared her firsthand accounts of the sit-ins. "There were a lot more southern whites involved in the movement than people realize," mentioned Mulholland, "but they were threatened, too ... The ones that I know were drawn by their religious faith."

Kennedy is in the process of making 7,000 cards that will be distributed at Arlington Art Truck activations, and via special kiosks positioned near the sites of the former drug stores where the lunch counter sit-ins occurred.

Mr. Kennedy's residency was to conclude by launching the spring 2020 season of interactive art truck programming with the exhibition *The Desegregation of Arlington Lunch Counters: 60th Anniversary Tribute by Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr.* In partnership with The Black Heritage Museum of Arlington, the program was designed to immerse participants in the history of Arlington's lunch counter sit-ins by inviting them to collect letterpress cards designed by Kennedy to commemorate each of the



Dion Diamond, an 18-year old Howard University student (center), and Joan Mulholland, Arlington resident (on the left, leaning on counter), during a sit-in demonstration in Arlington. DC Public Library, Evening Star Collection © Washington Post, June 10, 1960. Photo by Gene Abbott. Courtesy of Arlington Arts.

seven sit-ins that occurred from June 9 to 22, 1960 with quotes from community members involved in the peaceful protests. This is one of the installations that is being rethought for 2021.

"Printing is a very democratic process," observed Kennedy. "You're able to make multiple copies that you can distribute to many people. They can take copies home and share them. The Arlington project fell right into what I wanted to do: Get the public involved."

"Belief in Democracy" on chipboard by Amos Kennedy. Courtesy of Arlington Arts.

SIT-INS
WE HAVE A BELIEF IN DEMOCRACY,
AND WE BELIEVE THAT IN A
DEMOCRACY WE CAN
EAT WHERE WE LIKE TO.
ARLINGTON

Quote by David Hartsough
Sun Gazette
June 10, 1960

9
People's Drug Store
4709 Lee Highway
demolished, now CVS

A QUILT NAMED FREEDOM

The National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) is busy. Since March, the novel coronavirus has transformed how we work and engage with our public, and challenged us with how best to respond to the pandemic's disproportionate impact on African Americans. Having an almost equal bearing has been the resurgence of public demonstrations protesting the ongoing killing of Black men and women at the hands of the police, due in part to the long history of structural racism in our country that supports these acts of violence and protects its perpetrators. As stewards of African American history and culture, we know that we must document this period in order to help others understand it, both now and in the future. Already on display, however, in our quieter than usual galleries, are artifacts that provide as much insight into the moment as the events occurring on Black Lives Matter Plaza, just blocks away from our shuttered doors. One such item is the "Freedom Quilt" made by Jessie B. Telfair in 1975. Its compelling history shares important lessons about racism, memory and how works of craft can protest racial injustice.

THE HISTORY OF A 1975 ARTWORK THAT PROTESTS RACIAL INJUSTICE

By Joanne Hyppolite

Ph.D., supervisory curator of the African diaspora at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, and curator of the *Cultural Expressions* inaugural exhibition

The "Freedom Quilt" is a 73-inch-by-87-inch pieced and appliqued cotton quilt prominently displayed in a case beside the fourth floor *Cultural Expressions* exhibition entrance. Installed in January 2020, it is the second of a series of quilts that will occupy this case over the life of the permanent exhibition. Each quilt intended for the case stands as an example of the historical and artistic contributions of African Americans to American quilting traditions. Donated to the museum in 2016 by collector and

philanthropist Virginia Dwan on behalf of Dr. Lorenz and Mrs. Roberta Ng, the "Freedom Quilt" is a visually striking work composed of blue block letters on long, narrow red strips against a white muslin backing. The bold letters appliqued to the quilt spell out and repeat the capitalized word "FREEDOM" six times in six horizontal rows. The quilt compels attention and seeks engagement. What freedom? Whose freedom? Why freedom? The label partially answers these questions by telling the maker's story.



What we know about Jessie B. Telfair (1913–1986) is admittedly not enough. Our museum does not have a personally worded artistic statement. There is no recorded oral history. Yet the story of her quilts is in wide circulation due to the many exhibitions and publications that have included them and the collectors who purchased the quilts and communicated directly with the maker. Published on a family website is a biographical sketch written by Telfair’s daughter in 1988. From these sources we know that Jessie Bell “Sis” Telfair was not only a quilter, but also a mother, a wife and a respected, lifelong resident of a small southwestern Georgia town called Parrot. From her mother, she learned the craft of quilting—a skill that fostered her own contributions to and participation in what is often a familial and communal practice among African Americans.

Because they are present in familiar domestic spaces, such as the bedroom, and traditionally pieced from scraps of old family clothing, or received as gifts for special occasions, quilts by their nature capture and retain memories of life experiences. Telfair’s “Freedom Quilts,” however, were not made from cast off family clothing to grace her bed nor to be given as a gift to a loved one. The quilts stem from a different type of memory, one of a personal encounter with structural racism that occurred in the mid-1960s during a time when the grassroots organizing of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) had reached southwest Georgia.

SNCC was a civil rights organization founded in the early 1960s as an outgrowth of the student sit-in movements. Among its direct-action campaigns, SNCC worked to mobilize Black southerners who had long been disenfranchised through discriminatory voting regulations and acts of violence enacted by white officials and vigilantes. Inspired by SNCC, her family website tells us, Telfair decided to register to vote and, as a result, was fired from her position on the cafeteria staff at Helen Gurr Elementary School. Telfair’s dismissal was part of a long history of systemic racial discrimination in Terrell County, Georgia where Black voter registrations were repeatedly ignored or suppressed by subjecting Black county residents to oral and written tests that white residents did not have to complete or pass. Ten years after Telfair’s firing, the sting of being dismissed for attempting



“Freedom Quilt” on display in *Cultural Expressions* Gallery, 2020.
Photo by Joanne Hyppolite.

to exercise her democratic rights still lingered. At the encouragement of others, Telfair decided to express both her feelings and her rights in a quilt. As a result, the first “Freedom Quilt” materialized in 1975.

Telfair’s creation of the quilt dovetailed with the newfound scholarly interest in African American quilting practices that was emerging in the 1970s in disciplines such as folklife, art history and decorative arts. The “Freedom Quilt” was selected for display in an exhibition titled *Missing Pieces: Georgia Folk Art, 1770–1976* that traveled widely. Telfair would later create two similar quilts in 1982 and 1983 after the original was purchased by American folklife dealer and collectors Dr. and Mrs. Ng in 1981. The other, nearly identical, versions are in the collections of the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the American Folk Art Museum in New York City. All three versions have been displayed in numerous exhibitions over the past thirty years.

The quilts and the event that motivated their constructions offer lessons about racism, memory and the coupling of craft and protest. The first lesson is embedded in the aesthetic design of the quilt. Through her choice of the color scheme of red, white and blue for the cotton cloth, Telfair intentionally evokes the American flag, a symbol of freedom itself. While the use of the written word and the selection of the term “FREEDOM” may have been personal, it is also broadly applicable to both the nation and to African

Americans specifically. Telfair's individual experience with institutionalized racism connects to the larger collective lived experience of African Americans nationally, signifying the reality that while Black people had been legally free since 1865, they had not yet experienced full and true freedom. The quilts simultaneously encapsulate the contradiction between the stated ideals of the flag and the nation, and its failure to live up to that promise. The "Freedom Quilts" echo from the past a recent statement by founding director of the NMAAHC and current secretary of the Smithsonian Institution Lonnie Bunch III about the current demonstrations: "If you want to hold this country accountable, if you want to help this country fulfill its dreams, if you want to hold this country up to its stated ideals, then you've got to protest." Telfair's form of protest were the quilts.

Telfair is not the only artist to use the United States flag as a source of inspiration. Her quilts join a considerable body of work by diverse groups of multidisciplinary American artists, including Black artists Faith Ringgold, Kerry James Marshall and Sheila Pree Bright. As noted respectively by curator Michelle Joan Wilkinson and contributing scholar Marilyn Zoidis in the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture exhibition catalogue *For Whom It Stands: The Flag and the American People*, for many artists and activists the flag was "a barometer for measuring where the country was on the issue of liberty and justice for all. Artists [have] used the flag to test the limits of implicit freedoms" and to reflect on "the sometimes antagonistic ideas entwined within this single patriotic symbol."

We do not know from Telfair herself why she chose to use and repeat the particular word "FREEDOM" six times on the quilts, but visitors, curators and scholars provide their own interpretations. Some have suggested she was incorporating the "Freedom Now" slogan associated with SNCC. A few view it as a series of angry shouts, while others see it as a defiant expression of her freedom rather than a message about racism. One colleague of mine has suggested it is a chant or a call, akin to those used in past and present-day demonstrations, with each line and each quilt building on the other. In light of present circumstances, my own reading is that the quilt reflects the repetition and recycling of unresolved racial tensions in our country. The genius of Telfair's design is its ability to engage viewers with her personal story while allowing them to apply their own meaning.

Just as important as its lesson about racism is the message the "Freedom Quilts" imparts about the role of memory in documenting the lived experience of African Americans. Had she not memorialized the event in her quilts, it is unlikely that Telfair's story would have ever garnered public attention, given how silent the historical record often is on the everyday injustices African Americans face past and present. Writer Toni Morrison similarly emphasized the importance of memory to her craft when she wrote of her need to "substitute and rely on memory rather than history because I knew I could not, should not, trust the historical record to give me the insight into the cultural specificity I wanted." Morrison's mistrust of the historical record is rooted in the privileging of white voices and perspectives associated with the contents of historical record and those who have written, institutionalized and disseminated it in our schools and through mass media. In deliberately choosing memory over official history, Morrison addresses what social scientists who study the role of memory have learned through their research with live subjects: As reported in publications like *Monitor on Psychology* and *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, cultural values play an influential role in shaping memory. Memory can thus be a more reliable source for capturing the lived experiences of African Americans. Telfair's memory of her inability to exercise her rights without punishment fueled the creation of the "Freedom Quilts." Her memory offers a counter-narrative to the absence of her story and that of many southern African Americans in the official record.

Telfair is reflective of a diverse body of American women from the anti-slavery movement to the contemporary Women of Color Quilters Network, whose members have used quilts in the service of a cause or to reflect on the historical and lived experiences of African Americans. Her "Freedom Quilts" are powerful examples of how craft, like other forms of art, can be wielded as a medium for protest. Left posted on the walls, gates and buildings surrounding Black Lives Matter Plaza today are hundreds of handmade signs carried by demonstrators. They form an informal gallery of messages to visitors that reflect, implore, question and rage. One day, some of them or perhaps a photograph capturing them all may become part of the National Museum of African American History's collection. Blocks away, Telfair's first "Freedom Quilt" and too many objects from the past collected by our museum add their protests as well. Though not spoken out loud, they still speak and the noise they make is deafening.



CRITICAL CONNECTIONS

THE QUICKLY GROWING INITIATIVE CRAFTING THE FUTURE AIMS TO DIVERSIFY CRAFT, ART AND DESIGN

By Jennifer Anne Mitchell

Two craft artists, 2020 JRA Distinguished Artist Annie Evelyn and Corey Pemberton, who met at the Penland School of Craft started the nonprofit Crafting the Future in early 2019 to increase diversity in their predominantly white field. Through a Kickstarter campaign that same year, the group raised \$8,000 to send Tyrik Conaler and Shanti Broom, two Black students Evelyn met through the YAYA Arts Center for youth, to a two-week workshop at Penland.

The recent racial justice movement has catapulted Crafting the Future. "We had 2,000 dollars and 60 members before the murder of George Floyd," Evelyn says. The organization has received over \$120,000 in donations since Floyd was killed and a \$17,000 grant from the John and Robyn Horn Foundation in May 2020.

In addition to workshops, Evelyn and Pemberton plan to connect young artists of color with opportunities like internships to strengthen their potential for leadership in the fields of craft, art and design. Crafting the Future's website now

includes a curated directory of work by Black and brown makers. "By banding together and pooling the resources of like-minded artists and art appreciators," its vision states, "we can make the changes we want to see in our own communities."

The Craft Quarterly spoke with Evelyn and Pemberton to learn more about the initiative.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Craft Quarterly: What inspired you to start Crafting the Future?

Annie Evelyn: We both got to that point from different points. Obviously, Corey is a Black man, I'll let him speak to that, but for me, as a white person, I was not proud of my community— [of] liberal, open-minded people that believe[d] all these very nice things. But when we looked around at what was actually happening in our community, you couldn't tell that we thought that at all based on who we were spending time with.

Corey Pemberton: This topic had come up over and over again: Why is our field so white? And is there anything we can do about it? While I've had these conversations before, they felt different with Annie. She had a sense of passion and intention that I had never experienced before and, to be quite frank, I had never seen a white woman get so angry about not having more Black people around. And I thought if Annie can be this impassioned about this topic maybe other people can be, too.

CQ: How has the program impacted those it has served?

CP: Right after Tyrik and Shanti got back from Penland, immediately some of their mentors at YAYA [said] they had noticed an immediate change in them. How their work ethic had increased and their excitement about being in the studio had increased. Shanti has reached out to us multiple times, searching for opportunities. It's just clear that she's interested in expanding her network, which is one of the things we really wanted them to take away from this. The connections you can make at these institutions can last a lifetime.

AE: YAYA has these different apprentice levels as they go up and [Tyrik] is very high up in that. This summer, he landed an awesome

internship with an established mural painter. One of the paintings that he started at Penland is up for sale at YAYA now.

CQ: Did you ever feel you didn't belong in craft? Did any mentors or programs inspire you to pursue it?

AE: I wasn't inherently good at woodworking when I first started doing it, so I shied away from that. I was good at welding and sewing. So I just made metal and upholstered furniture. It wasn't until I had more confidence as a human being later in life that I was like, I want to make this chair out of wood, so I'm just going to start working at this woodworking and get good enough to make what I need to make.

CP: I went to Virginia Commonwealth University to study graphic design and illustration because that's what I thought an artist was. The first time I went to Penland [is when] I realized how someone can make a living at this, because even in art school that wasn't discussed so much.

I acknowledge in hindsight that I have lived a privileged life and there are opportunities that I've had that had I not had them I would not be in this [craft, art and design] world. That's one of the things that we're talking about with Crafting the Future is opening up these access points and just bringing awareness to communities that might not know about these things.

CQ: Any other thoughts?

CP: If somebody is interested in getting involved with what we're doing they can go to our website craftingthefuture.org and become a member. Our membership doesn't give you a tote bag or a coffee mug; what it gives you is the opportunity to be involved in this cause and stay connected as we grow and stay informed about different opportunities that we're able to offer people.

AE: Institutions within themselves cannot make this change we want, we all have to work for it. On an individual level, if you're unhappy within your community, you have to do something.

ADVOCACY AND AID



Photo courtesy of CERF+.

THE NONPROFIT CERF+ RELIES ON MUTUAL AID TO CARE FOR CRAFT ARTISTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

By Cornelia Carey
Executive director of CERF+

200 craft artists. The grant program focuses on artists currently facing housing, food and health insecurities, and was timed to coincide with the conclusion of the federal unemployment supplement.

"It's such a confusing time as this pandemic continues on and on," explains sculptor Akiko Jackson who benefitted from the relief grant, "adding to immense hardships we cannot solve on our own."

The second cycle of the relief program will distribute grants in September, and CERF+ is also developing additional support focused on recovery for late fall and early winter.

CERF+ has also seen a significant increase in the number of requests for assistance from its general emergency relief fund. Earthquakes in Puerto Rico, floods in the Midwest, wildfires in the West and the "everyday" variety of disasters such as home or studio fires, illness and injury have all contributed to these uncharted times for the organization. Since the beginning of the fiscal year, CERF+ has distributed \$377,842 to 122 artists.

Fortunately, CERF+'s community has been very generous during this time and welcomed many new supporters. The organization remains true to its mutual aid roots, and committed to the well-being of artists who contribute so much to our communities and provide perspective in our lives.

"When I witness people's lives being taken away from their families," Jackson says, "I'm so grateful to still be breathing."

In late March of this year, as announcements of closed galleries and cancelled shows sailed in relentlessly, the six-member staff team at CERF+ began brainstorming their response to the threats this virus would pose to the craft community. With 34 years of experience as a nonprofit that provides relief to artists and helps build resilient careers, CERF+ knew that a response to the crisis would have to be multifaceted, accessible and long term. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, CERF+ inboxes have been flooded with inquiries for relief; the pandemic's toll on artists, who are often without a financial safety net, has been acute.

CERF+ has responded to the pandemic from multiple angles: engaging in political advocacy to ensure that federal relief packages and policies address the needs of artists, providing direct financial relief and, of course, raising the necessary funds required to do this work. CERF+ also became a field partner to Artist Relief, a coronavirus relief effort created by a cohort of artists' service organizations who together have distributed \$11 million in \$5,000 grants as of Aug. 14.

In July, CERF+ launched a fast-moving COVID-19 relief grant program. Run in two cycles, the first cycle in August distributed grants of \$1,000 to

A VISIT TO THE "CRAFT CAPITAL"

THE ORGANIZATION CRAFTNOW PHILADELPHIA DEMONSTRATES WHY CRAFT IS VITAL TO THE CITY

By Leila Cartier
Executive director of CraftNOW Philadelphia

CraftNOW's second book "Craft Capital: Philadelphia's Cultures of Making" was exclusively released to American Craft Council conference attendees on Oct. 18, 2019, then globally released in spring 2020 by Schiffer Publishing.

When CraftNOW began adopting the theme "craft capital," we wanted the definition of "capital" interpreted broadly for its relation not only to place and prominence but also economics and resources. In our editor Glenn Adamson's introduction to the book "Craft Capital," he points to the Liberty Bell as an "unbeatable as an icon of Philadelphia craft" and comments on the distinctive aspects of the city that have emboldened craft practices since the founding of our nation.

"Combined in the story of the Liberty Bell are the city's most enduring qualities: a concentration of skilled makers, adaptive in the face of adversity; connections to other, larger urban centers; and an ever-evolving relationship to its own history."

Philadelphia is still evolving. All of CraftNOW's in-person programming—lectures, demonstrations and special events—were on hold and then erased from the 2020 calendar by late spring due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. Despite these changes, CraftNOW has chosen to persevere in its mission of uniting, supporting and promoting Philadelphia's craft community to help ensure it remains intact.

Partnering with the James Renwick Alliance on the Aug. 2 Virtual Trip to Philly allowed us an opportunity to combine two of the programs we were looking forward to hosting this year. We envisioned an exciting book launch event for "Craft Capital: Philadelphia's Cultures of Making." Additionally, CraftNOW typically hosts in-person tours each year inviting guests to spend an afternoon visiting extraordinary spaces not generally accessible to the public.

We wanted this virtual tour to be informative as well as interactive, with guests wandering virtually through presentations by Bahdeebahdu, The Clay Studio, The Center for Art in Wood, Gravers Lane Gallery and Philadelphia Museum of Art. We spoke with the collector Helen Drutt—a 2018 JRA Master Educator—seated in her dining room and the owners of the Louis Kahn Esherick House, Paul Savidge and Dan Macey. Artists Judith Schaechter, Doug Bucci, Warren Muller and John Rais talked





Judith Schaechter in her studio. From the publication "Craft Capital." Photo by Jessica Kourkounis.

about the vibrancy and importance of Philadelphia's craft culture during a Philadelphia Museum of Art event in 2014. Hollander's experience in the field combined with Seltzer's advocacy for quality of life in Philadelphia established the basis and character of the organization.

Stating that Philadelphia is a "craft capital" indicates our belief that the field holds value and contributes to the prosperity of our city. The impact and hardships brought upon our creative communities this year will have many lasting effects. As an antidote, we know craft to be a powerful means to cultivate personal agency, economic independence, cultural empowerment and unity. We have devoted much of this year to research that will lead to greater investment, more calculated policies and new programs to advance the craft and making sector. The presenters we showcased on this virtual platform are all dedicated to the future of craft in its many forms and are our constant collaborators. They demonstrate that, as far as CraftNOW is concerned, human capital is where much of Philadelphia's true value lies.

intimately about their work. Curators shared pieces by other prominent Philadelphia artists—the list could go on and on. By the end of the program it was clear that Philadelphia is still bursting with craft energy despite the trials each institution or individual has faced during quarantine. We had truly only skimmed along the surface of our "craft capital."

The program began with a look inside the collection of Clara Hollander, the founding President of CraftNOW. Her devotion to craft was centerstage during the presentation as she talked about the first major piece she and her husband acquired after a visit to meet the late artist and craftsman Wendell Castle, who is famous for his trompe l'oeil collection.

"Wendell picked us up at the airport wearing his sheepskin coat," Hollander recounted. "When we arrived at his studio, I was surprised to see the identical coat that Wendell was wearing on a coat hanger. On closer examination, we realized that it was made out of wood."

Hollander co-founded CraftNOW with David Seltzer after a chance meeting and spirited discussion



Warren Muller's "Palace Theater," 26 feet x 10 feet in diameter hanging in his working studio, Bahdeebahdu, shared with designer RJ Thornburg. "Palace Theater" currently hangs in Prospector Theater in Ridgefield, CT. Photo courtesy of the artist.

LEGACY, RELATIONSHIPS AND POWER

INSIGHTS FROM THE NEW JOINT CURATOR OF THE RENWICK GALLERY AND THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

By Anya Montiel

Ph.D., curator of American and Native American women's art and craft, a joint position with the Renwick Gallery and the National Museum of the American Indian, and funded by the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative



The exhibition *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists* opened in mid-February at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM). The exhibition features art created by Indigenous women artists of the United States and Canada over time and across mediums. Organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the co-curators Jill Ahlberg Yohe and Teri Greeves (Kiowa) implemented a collaborative curatorial process consisting of a 20-plus person advisory committee of Native American artists, art historians and scholars. The curators

and advisory committee members arrived at a consensus in each phase of the exhibition planning before moving forward.

The result of the collaborative curatorial process is an exhibition that acknowledges the vast artistic achievements of Native American women artists and answers the fundamental question: *Why do Native American women artists create?*

While there are many answers to that question, the committee selected three frameworks for

visitors' understanding: "legacy," "relationships" and "power." "Legacy" recognizes how Native American artworks exist along a continuum and how those artworks draw from past aesthetics, knowledge systems and connections to ancestors. The "relationships" frame highlights the interconnectedness of all things, such as humans, plants, animals, land and unseen forces like wind. "Power" speaks to the role of Indigenous women as life creators as well as holding political, social and spiritual leadership roles in their communities.



Elizabeth Hickox (Wiyot), "Lidded container," ca. 1924, twining and porcupine quills, Denver Art Museum Collection: Purchase from Grace Nicholson, 1946.388A-B. Photo © Denver Art Museum.

The exhibition's opening events included a blessing by Gabi Tayac of the Piscataway Nation and a tour with the curators and some of the artists. There were more tours and programs planned, but the Renwick and the other Smithsonian museums closed to the public on March 14 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the closure, some *Hearts of Our People* tours were given to Native American visitors, government agencies and a museum curatorial group from Europe. The Renwick Gallery extended the closing date of *Hearts of Our People* from May 17 to Aug. 2, but it became clear that the Renwick would not reopen in August. The exhibition had to be deinstalled, packed and shipped to its final museum venue, the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, for an Oct. 7 opening date.

With news that *Hearts of Our People* would not reopen in DC, the Renwick curators worked with the SAAM staff to provide online offerings to the public. On Sept. 17, an online tour of the exhibition took place utilizing photographs of *Hearts of Our People* installed at the Renwick. The exhibition curators, Yohe and Greeves, and two of the artists and advisory board members, Kelly Church (Anishinaabe) and Carla Hemlock (Kaniienkeháka), held an online conversation about the exhibition and their artwork, which was released on the SAAM YouTube channel on Oct. 1. While these programs are not comparable to walking through the galleries or attending a live discussion, they were a means of marking the exhibition's closure at the Renwick. Going forward, arts and crafts from the Renwick Gallery and National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) collections will be brought together to communicate the resiliency and innovation of

American and Native American women artists. While access to the collections facility and the libraries is currently closed, Renwick curators have been working to acquire new works for the collection. These acquisitions will fill in the gap in the existing Renwick collection and complement the NMAI collection.

Exhibitions and programs will also bridge the mission of both institutions. For example, in 2021, the National Museum of the American Indian will host *Preston Singletary: Raven and the Box of Daylight*. The exhibition, on tour from the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Washington, will feature works by glass artist Preston Singletary (Tlingit). Curated by Miranda Belarde-Lewis (Tlingit/Zuni), a professor at the University of Washington and a former NMAI curatorial assistant, the exhibition narrative tells the story of Raven, the creator of the world and giver of the sun, moon and stars, through a multisensory experience of music, Pacific Northwest soundscapes and image projections. Singletary is an artist who merges European glass blowing traditions with Northwest Coast formline designs and his Tlingit heritage.

Once the Smithsonian museums reopen, joint programs will build a long-standing relationship between the National Museum of the American Indian and the Renwick Gallery.

Page 18: Jamie Okuma (Luiseño/Shoshone-Bannock), "Adaptation II," 2012, shoes designed by Christian Louboutin, leather, glass beads, porcupine quills, sterling silver cones, brass sequins, chicken feathers, cloth, deer rawhide, and buckskin. Minneapolis Institute of Art. Bequest of Virginia Doneghy, by exchange 2012.68.1A,B. Photo by Jamie Okuma © 2012 Courtesy of Minneapolis Institute of Art.

SAVE THE DATES

OCTOBER 2020

- 10/13 Virtual Preview for *Forces of Nature: Renwick Invitational*
7 - 9 p.m.
- 10/24 JRA CRAFT WEEKEND
Distinguished
Educator Symposium
1 - 3 p.m.
- 10/24 JRA CRAFT WEEKEND
Carnival of Craft
7 - 8:30 p.m.
- 10/25 JRA CRAFT WEEKEND
Craft Collections Tour
3 - 4:30 p.m.

NOVEMBER 2020

- 11/17 James Renwick Alliance
Annual Meeting
7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 2020

- 11/28 - 12/5 JRA Day
Online Artist Showcase
and Sale
- 12/8 Renwick Gallery and Textile
Museum online conversation
with Rowland Ricketts

JANUARY 2021

- 1/24 Caucus Afternoon of Learning
featuring the National Museum
of Women in the Arts
2 - 3 p.m.

Button with the slogan "Use Your Vote," Don Howard Associates Inc., American, ink on paper with metal and plastic. Courtesy of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.



JRA CRAFT WEEKEND

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