

CRAFT QUARTERLY

JAMES RENWICK ALLIANCE FOR CRAFT
SUMMER 2021



FROM
THE
ARTIST
TO THE
COLLECTION

DIRECTOR'S LETTER



There have been many new developments at the Alliance in the last several months, including a meaningful change to our name. The James Renwick Alliance for Craft or JRACraft for short, defines our organizational mission to support the public appreciation, education, and connoisseurship of American craft.

Founded originally as the James Renwick Collectors' Alliance, this issue of the Craft Quarterly pays homage to our history, but looks at collecting from contemporary perspectives. Collecting is often considered a pastime of luxury but throughout these pages, we look at how collecting can be an approachable part of the craft ecosystem and a bold decision to support artists and the craft movement.

We hear from three collectors under 40 breaking stereotypes and look at private and public collections that shape the field. This includes the Smithsonian's first online exhibition, the White House Collection of Craft, the oldest public studio craft collection at the Museum of Arts and Design and the largest craft collection in the country at the Racine Art Museum. Additionally, we learn about artists, opportunities for deacquisition and hear the story of collectors Vicente Lim and Robert Tooley whose studio ceramic collection has become a significant resource for the robust educational social media feed that educates new generations of enthusiasts.

As we approach 2022, we recognize that the Alliance has been inspiring collectors, supporting artists and encouraging enthusiasts in craft for 40 years. We have helped build the collection at the Smithsonian Renwick Gallery and continue to support the acquisition of exciting works like "Juicy" by Roberto Lugo, featured on the front cover. Learn more at jra.org and join us for an upcoming trip, program, or visit us in Washington, DC for JRACraft Weekend on October 29-31.

Jaimianne Jacobin
Director, JRACraft



Untitled (basket) #B20-55 by Preston Singletary, 2021 Master of the Medium.

CRAFT QUARTERLY

On the cover: "Juicy" by Roberto Lugo. JRACraft's 50th Anniversary Acquisitions Fund is supporting the purchase of "Juicy" for the Renwick Gallery's permanent collection. Learn more about the 50th Anniversary Acquisitions Fund at jra.org. Photo courtesy of Wexler Gallery.

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

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The Craft Quarterly is published three times a year by the James Renwick Alliance for Craft, an independent national nonprofit organization that celebrates the achievements of America's craft artists and fosters scholarship, education, connoisseurship and public appreciation of craft art.

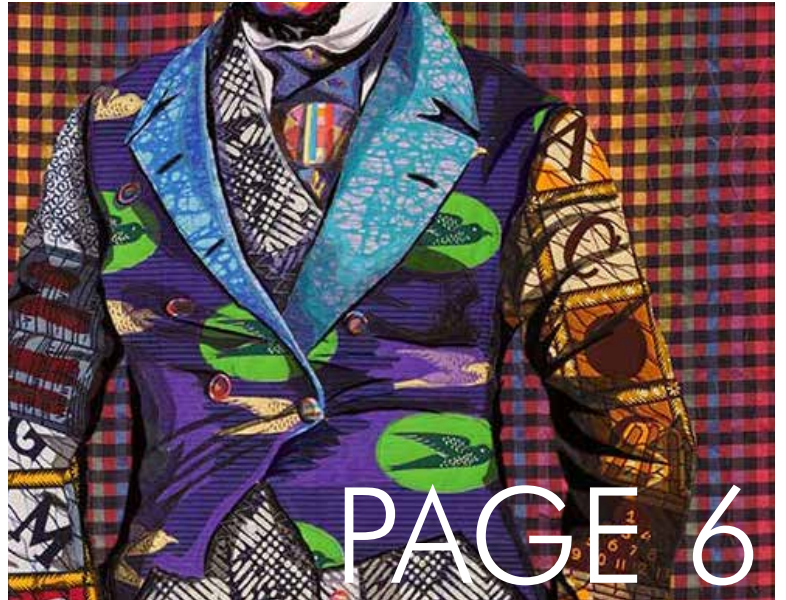
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CONTENTS

4 THE ARTISTS

- 4 Capturing Dreams: The Captivating World of Christina Bothwell
- 6 Bisa Butler: A Collection of Stories in Textiles



9 PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

- 9 Next Generation of Collectors
- 11 Gifting Your Collection
- 13 Momentous Hoard: A Life of Love and Craft



15 PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- 15 The Legacy of Paul J. Smith: Artist, Curator, MAD Museum Director
- 17 Contemporary Craft Builds a Home on Midwest Main Street
- 19 White House Collection of Craft

Detail of "The Storm, The Whirlwind, and the Earthquake" by Bisa Butler. Photo courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery.

"Daemon Leather" by Nick Weddell, in the collection of Heath Ballowe.

Installation of Craft Front and Center at the Museum of Arts and Design



THE ARTISTS

Capturing Dreams

THE CAPTIVATING WORLD OF CHRISTINA BOTHWELL

By Rebecca Ravenal,
Ceramic Artist,
JRACraft board
member and chair
of the Distinguished
Artist Series

Christina Bothwell's sculptures are like dreams in solid form, somehow evanescent and shimmering, enigmatic and hauntingly beautiful, with a spiritual aura that transports the viewer. She uses a range of unusual techniques to create these figurative works, addressing the most elemental yet difficult subjects of birth, death, our souls, the essence of life itself.

The daunting apprehension and wonder of motherhood and the comfort and awesome power of nature are consistent themes for Bothwell. Her sculptures often depict children and animals, sometimes hybrids of the two. It can seem joyous or disturbing, or a mixture of conflicting emotions to contemplate these surreal images: little girls and woodland creatures joined in a childhood game; a large bear cradling or maybe absconding with a small child; a fetal figure curled inside an animal form; a girl lying prostrate while another hovers above her like a dream or a soul leaving the body. Bothwell likes the ambiguity, reminding the viewer of our vulnerability and the ever-present spirit world.

A natural storyteller, Bothwell processes her world through making art. An unusual upbringing gave her space to look inward and develop her unique vision and strong emotional intelligence, an ability, she believes, to "see the energy" around people. Each sculpture arises from somewhere deep in her own subconscious or from an evocative tale



"Ring Around the Rosie" by Christina Bothwell. Photo courtesy Heller Gallery.

shared purposefully by a stranger, and takes shape in clay, glass, found objects, and paint. Largely self-taught, the artist's free and fearless approach allows her to combine these materials in unorthodox ways.

Bothwell trained in painting, started working in ceramic, and then discovered glass, which she views as a magical substance transmitting light and color that animate her sculptures. Her recent practice of embedding "inclusions" into the glass creates figures within figures, adding a dimension that deepens that mystery and magic.

The mix of materials and techniques gives an intriguing variety to each piece. The opacity and smokiness of pit fired clay plays against the luminosity of the subtly colored glass. Part of a vintage doll or other found object lends quirkiness. A bit of painted design enlivens the surface further.

The intentionally unrefined surfaces are a roadmap of the artist's touch and add to the power of the work.

The delicacy of the figures belies the extraordinary physicality of the process of making them. Bothwell begins by sculpting forms using soft beeswax. These are coated in plaster which hardens around the shape. The wax is steamed out, leaving a cavity in the plaster which outlines the intended sculpture. This mold is filled with bits of glass and heated in a dramatic process that entails donning a fireproof suit and reaching inside a red-hot kiln to keep the molds topped off with more glass as it melts down. Bothwell's husband, artist Robert Bender, helps with the process. Then, there is the "cold work" of grinding, polishing, and painting to finish each piece.

Partly because of the time and intense dedication it takes to produce this work, it was especially devastating when a fire burned through Bothwell's barn in 2018, destroying her studio and decades of artwork and personal items. She recalls standing outside the burning building hearing her pieces explode like dropped chandeliers. This kind of destruction could be utterly defeating. But Bothwell found this event strangely liberating, "a personal resurrection of sorts."

The experience proved that she could withstand this great loss and still be filled with the drive to create, without the pressure of sales or other extraneous concerns and with the pure childhood joy of "making something out of nothing." With help from the Craft Emergency Relief Fund (CERF+) and other grants, she rebuilt an incredible studio and got back to work. Bothwell calls her studio time an "anchor" and perceives her art as a "prayer for a return to peace and happiness."

Bothwell's place in national and international museums, galleries, and private collections is well-earned. Recently, she was featured in JRACraft's Distinguished Artist Series, sharing some of her techniques and musing on her life and work. One gains from those events a sense of her quiet but immense strength and the deep well of inspiration she draws on to manifest her bold artistic vision. Bothwell feels her pieces are most successful "when I allow myself to perceive the world through my heart." Letting the viewer see that vision through her sculptures is a captivating and beautiful experience.



*"Ascending" by Christina Bothwell.
Photo courtesy Heller Gallery.*

BISA BUTLER

A COLLECTION OF STORIES IN TEXTILES

By Caroline Kipp, Curator
of Contemporary Art at
the George Washington
Museum and The Textile
Museum

Bisa Butler's quilts hold a collection of stories. Some of these stories are personal – about the artist's beliefs and sensibilities – others reflect on larger social and cultural narratives. Butler's chosen medium, quilting, is an excellent format for collecting stories. They are layered objects, both literally and conceptually. Inherently intimate objects, they were designed to lay on a bed, swaddling the body from birth to death. Infused with time, and intention, they are objects which can hold whatever is imbued in them by their maker.

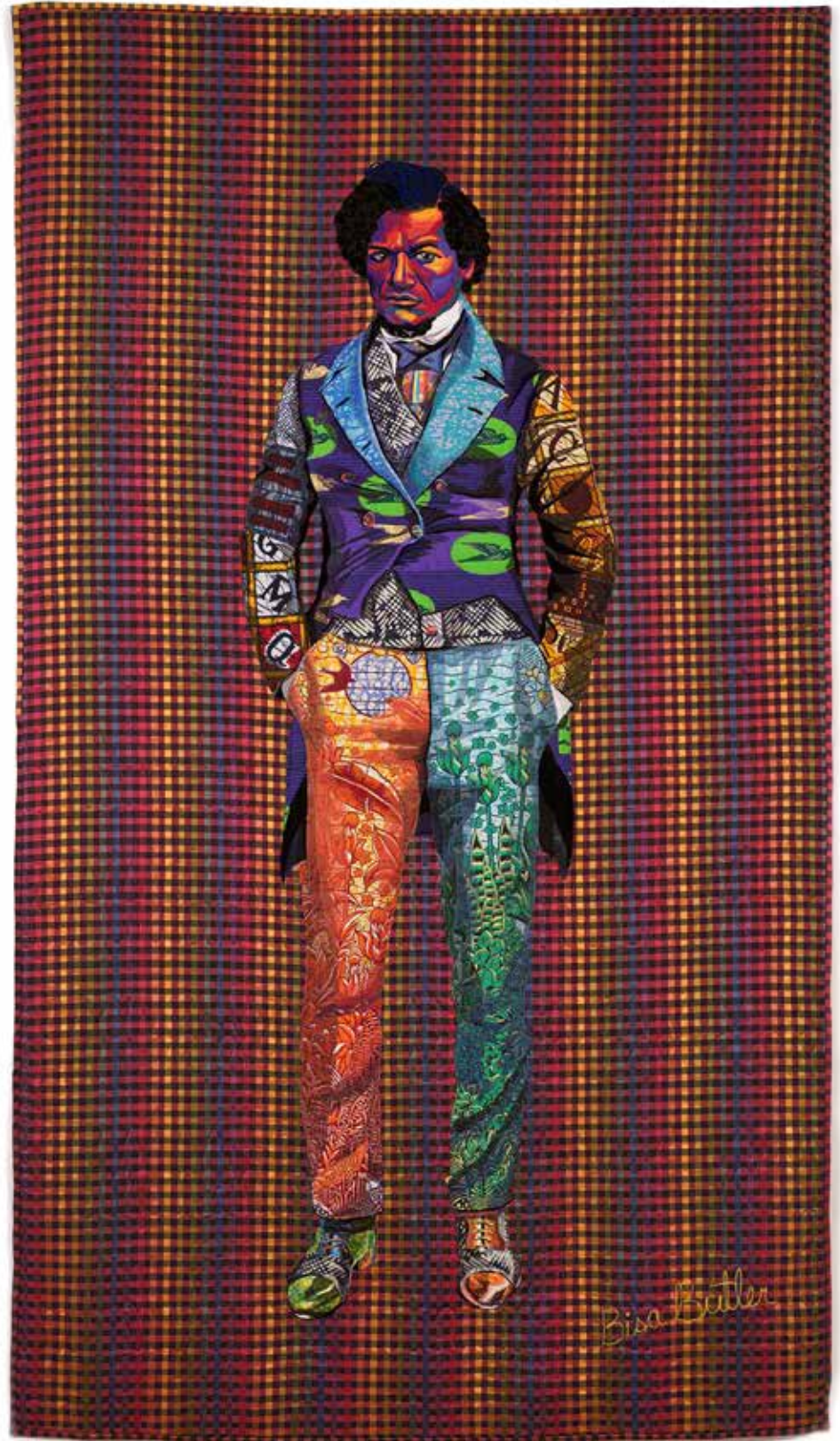
Add on the use of portraiture, and now you have an object inseparable from the stories about the depicted person. When choosing fabric for a quilt, Butler expertly taps the wealth of connotations embedded within fabric itself to enrich the layers of meaning within her artworks. In portraits of unnamed individuals, she uses her textile and color choices to infuse speculative notions of who this person once was, and what they once loved. Other times, she draws from personal memory or



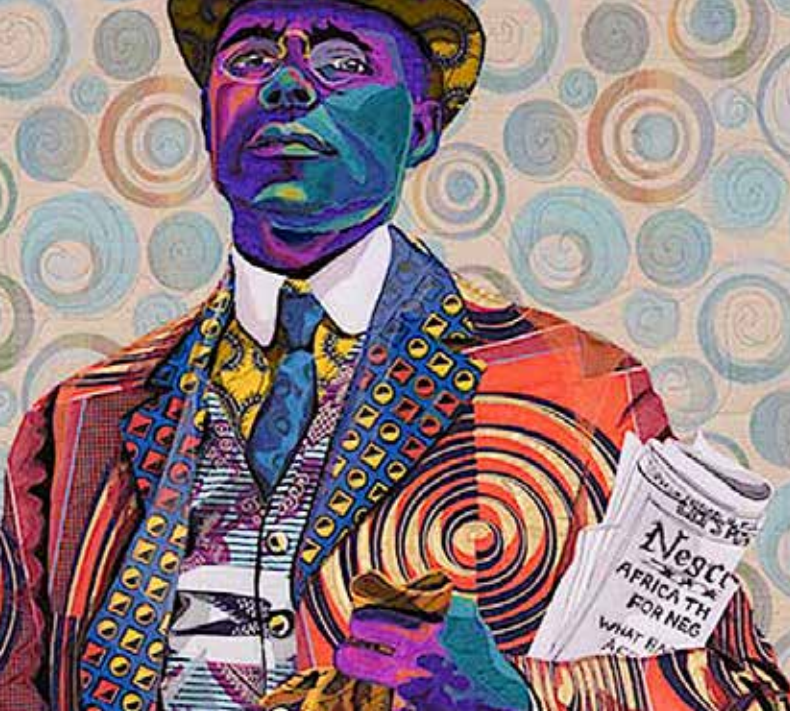
historical anecdote and the subject's own writing to dictate the fabrics. Yet in all of her work we see the same rigor of conceptualization, an iconic and exuberant use of color and pattern supporting the layered multiplicity, the collection of meaning.

One of her earliest fabric works was an imagined portrait of her paternal grandfather, a gentleman she never met and of whom she had no photos, but nonetheless was foundational to her own existence. For this work, she intentionally incorporated fragments of her father's dashiki. "As I put it together" says Butler, "I felt a sort of spirit and passion coming from this piece." This, and other intimate family portraits were the beginning of her path towards fusing her painterly grasp of color with "a new philosophy where fabric choices tell a story" that unfurls deeper meanings. By using cloth which represented family members, or even in some instances belonged to them, Butler brought her portraits to a new depth of visual and conceptual complexity.

Butler sources many of her textiles from Vlisco, a Dutch company founded in 1846 which specializes in Wax Hollandais, Super-Wax and Java patterns that are still made with time-honored methods and materials. Vlisco is perhaps the only company in the world where the customers name and assign meaning to the patterns, making it unique amongst textile producers. More importantly however, is that this dialogue allows the Ankara (African or Dutch

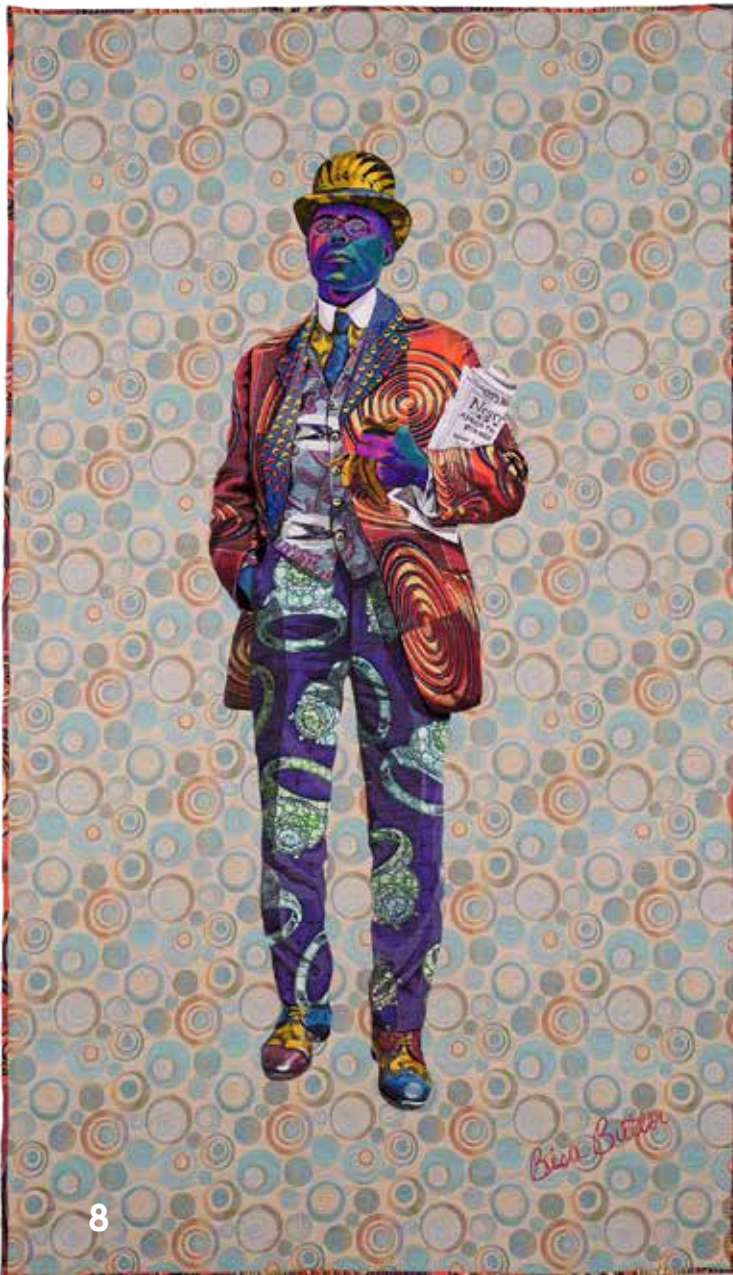


"The Storm, The Whirlwind, and the Earthquake" by Bisa Butler. Photo courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery.



wax print) textiles to become an archive of stories and meanings encapsulated within fabric. Speed Bird is a pattern which Butler has used in several portraits, including those of Frederick Douglass, Emmett J. Scott, and Trevor Stuurman. The pattern is also known as Air Afrique and Rich Today, Poor Tomorrow, and depending on which country you're in it could symbolize change, transition, freedom, prosperity, asking for favors, or the transience of stability.

When describing her use of the textile in "Africa The Land Of Hope and Promise For Negro People's of the World," a portrait of Emmett J. Scott, she mentions that she chose this fabric to convey "wealth, prosperity and movement." In reference to Frederick Douglass' portrait "The Storm, the Whirlwind, and the Earthquake," Butler states that "I used the Speed Bird fabric on his vest to talk about his escape from slavery, his prosperity later in life, his quest for freedom." Her own multiple interpretations and applications of this pattern speaks to the power of this particular design, and Ankara fabrics as a whole. Their pictorial quality allows them to remain mutable in nature, complex living symbols with both personal and cultural connotations. In the same portrait of Douglass, Butler used the ABC pattern, which is a "fabric [that] was used [by the wearer] to celebrate that 'I am literate, I can read and write, and I am proud that I am educated'." For the artist, this is a deeply intentional and profound symbol for Douglass who emancipated himself, first by learning to read and write, and then later through applying those skills to forge his own free papers. In thinking about the layering of these stories, both historical and contemporary, Butler says that "I'm using fabric now to still tell the story of the people in the portraits, but by using African fabrics I am giving people back their heritage and identity."



Thinking of collections, we often imagine them as groupings of objects. Some financially precious, others sentimentally so, but nearly always as things. Butler's quilts are collections in and of themselves, composed of thousands of pieces of fabric. However, her real collection is, in fact, the stories, memories, hopes, and dreams that are layered between all that beautiful fabric.

"Africa The Land Of Hope and Promise For Negro People's of the World" by Bisa Butler. Photo courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery.

NEXT GENERATION OF COLLECTORS

By Jaimianne Jacobin, Director of JRACraft
with assistance from Inga Bragadottir, Fiber
artist and JRACraft intern



Laura Galaida **Washington DC**

Laura Galaida is a Client Manager for the Foundations and Endowments Specialty Practice at Truist. She serves as the Treasurer for the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts and is active with the Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden and The Phillips Collection. She has a background in art history and has worked within the decorative arts department at Sotheby's auction house. She and her husband, Todd, do not delineate art from craft in their home, owning works by Roberto Lugo, Sebastian Martorana, Ron Gorchoy, Matt Johnson and others.



Heath Ballowe **New York NY**

Heath Ballowe is an MA candidate at the Bard Graduate Center, studying Decorative Art, Design History and Material Culture. He has managed multiple private and public art collections including The Clay Studio cataloging project and The Lim/Tooey private collection. He has also taught at the Rhode Island School of Design and Moore College of Art and Design. Heath is a collector of prints, a steward of decorative arts and buyer of contemporary and historical works from Stickley furniture to ceramics by Peter Pincus and Lauren Mabry.



Jeff Hillam **Boston MA**

Jeff Hillam is an entrepreneur, investor, speaker, and art collector. He serves as the marketing chair for the Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass (AACG). He has been collecting with his wife, Alisha since 2016. They have a particular interest in international glass, calligraphy, and Islamic art. His first major piece was by the Chihuly studios and has since grown to include several well-known glass artists including Harvey Littleton, Peter Bremers, Ramon Orlina, Alex Bernstein, Jason Chakravarty, Perrin & Perrin, Deborah Czeresko, and others.

As the craft field evolves with new and emerging artists, so does the landscape of craft collecting. The accessibility to artists, and information through social media platforms and the internet has significantly influenced the art market. We sat down with three collectors under the age of 40 to discuss their journey into the art field and debunk many of the stereotypes that exist around young collectors.

The significant growth in the online art market has largely been driven by young people and pushed forward by the isolation caused by the coronavirus pandemic. In a recent study published this year by Artsy, 83% of respondents said they had purchased art online, which is up from 64% of collectors in 2019. Online art market participation was even higher among what they call "Next-Gen Collectors," 91% of whom said they bought art online. Collector Heath Ballowe says it's about learning how to buy that makes it attainable "and if you love it enough, you'll pursue it." Of the collectors we interviewed, all buy from multiple channels, including auctions, galleries, and directly from the artists, in-person and online.

Stereotypes of young collectors are filled with ideas that millennials are minimalists, only interested in experiences. However, unique experiences that introduce them to artistic processes build relationships between artists and young collectors that often encourages purchases. "A lot of the drive behind [collecting] for me is the experience of being with artists [and] learning about them" said collector Laura Galaida. This idea is also reflected in an Artnet News interview with Kenneth Schlenker, one of the co-founders of the online art sales company ArtList noted that this propensity distinguishes millennial collectors from older generations. According to him, older collectors might hire an adviser, work closely with only one or two galleries, or read [prominent arts magazines] to make decisions about which pieces to acquire. Younger collectors, on the other hand, aided by new technology that makes communication easier than ever, forge connections with a broader array of artists and galleries. They seek more personal, less mediated access to art.

Technology's influence to create online communities of interest has increased American individualism and has led to collectors who see their purchases as an extension of their own

10 personal identity and values. Jeff Hillam finds it to be a very personal pursuit "I have

been able to take the collecting and integrate it with other parts of our life. For us, the art and the people, and the creation, and the stories, and meanings are expressed through our collection." Heath Bellow sees his collecting as a type of advocacy "By buying [art] you're endorsing it for posterity. That's how collections work and that's how museum collections come together. The stuff they get is generally donated or given, so whoever bought that object is the endorser and that's why it's still here...because somebody cared enough."

All of our collectors had advice for others interested in getting into collecting. Hillam recognized the importance of continuous learning. "There's a collecting journey, and alongside of it there's an educational journey." Not only is there learning about the artist, there is also learning about how to buy, but it doesn't need to be intimidating. Working at Sotheby's, Galaida noted "Things felt very unattainable... you can get really skewed by the prices. I viewed collecting as a very expensive and lofty pursuit that you need to gain entry into but it's become clear that's not the case." Hillam has a unique perspective on the importance of collecting early on. "We like the idea of starting now and participating in the market for two generations of artists. If I started in 2010-2015 and if we do this until the 2070s that will have spanned a very broad cross section of artists in the glass movement and that's fun. Not only do we want to buy, I also want to help build the market. I want to be part of the evolution and want to be on the collectors' side of how the glass perpetuates."

What we learned from speaking with these collectors is that as we look into the future of collecting, it may be time to rethink our assumptions and barriers. The structures that once existed around collecting can be limiting and not always beneficial to the artists and future collectors. As we progress, we already see early signs for a revival of maximalist interiors, an interest in material-based works, and a blurring of art vs. craft that will continue to change the collecting field, but one thing will always be consistent. Artwork is part of our shared identity, a self-expression of humanity that will forever be supported by collectors as an important part of society and significant part of the craft legacy.

GIFTING YOUR *Collection*

By Lee Eagle, appraiser, attorney, arts advocate, collector
and principal of Eagle Associates LLC.

Art is an expression of you and your collecting priorities. It is a unique asset with continuing value throughout the time it is owned and at the time it passes out of one's ownership. When buying works of art, collectors are taking a step that makes you a custodian on behalf of at least two parties: the artist, whose work you hold for a period of time, and those who care for the works after your ownership. The choice can be yours as to the next step in the ownership chain.

Every art collector must eventually contend with the question of who will take possession of their works after them. The sooner a thoughtful planning process begins, the easier it will be. Here are some things to consider:

- If the desire is to leave the works to your personal beneficiaries, it is important to have an open and honest discussion with them to confirm if they are interested in owning and stewarding your art and the responsibilities that come with it.
- Selling the art to add liquidity to your assets requires careful research to determine the best route to your desired outcome, considering tax consequences of sales and timing, be it at auction, through a gallery, or by private sale.
- Donating the works to a museum or other nonprofit entity may be a highly satisfying experience that is beneficial to you, the recipient, and the artist. The process of making donations can be educational and lead to a more in-depth knowledge of the art that you have been drawn to. However, prior discussions with museums/nonprofits regarding the long-term care of the work and knowing if your work will be placed on display, temporarily, in permanent collections, or in storage should be addressed.



Donating Artwork

Surveying options of where to donate artwork means getting exposure to organizations that collect and present exhibitions that align with the donor's interests and collection. My best advice is to join and become active in several museums. Attend lectures and artist talks in person or watch them online. Take every opportunity to talk with the curator and development officer to better understand the the issues involved and their thinking about their collection. Unless you've been fortunate to have a museum seek part or all of your artworks, reach out to make them aware that you are interested in making a gift to their institution. Curators are well attuned to such opportunities.

Donating a work of art does not have to be an intimidating process. Museums want to add appropriate works to their collections and welcome offers. However, be aware that museums have collecting plans and donation policies that guide and impact work they will be able to receive. For example, institutions in large cities may have limited storage. The intended donation needs to align with their collecting plan and not duplicate their collection. Don't be discouraged if you are not successful the first time you try. It is important to approach a number of museums around the country and possibly the world whose mission aligns with the collection.

While museums are attractive for many donors, there are other viable and perhaps less complex options. Other nonprofits will happily receive gifts of art and make good use of it. Hospitals and universities, nonprofit art centers, even the Federal Reserve Board of Governors are all potential recipients of art they might display in their public areas. This can especially be rewarding if there is a thematic tie in the artwork to the institution or a family connection.

The emotional component of donating work to any institution is the acceptance by the collector that the work will no longer be in their home. The positives of donation are many but, perhaps, near the top of the list is the honor and prestige that accrues to artists whose work is in a museum or notable public venue and thus is accessible to the public. A museum or other institution agreeing to accept your gift is a big step forward.

What You Need To Do

The initial step in making the process go smoothly is to get organized. First, create or complete a record of value. That begins with the invoice from when the work is purchased and continues throughout the ownership of the artwork. The file on the work should also contain records of appraisals for insurance purposes, information on the artist, and records of any exhibitions or publications that specifically include the work. Aim to be meticulous in this aspect of your stewardship and provenance of the object. It is wise to create a simple digital inventory of works as the number of works that you own grows. It can be done with a standard spreadsheet or text document or with specifically developed software.

Considerations In Making the Gift

The financial benefit of donating comes from claiming a charitable contribution deduction on your federal income tax. This will require that you engage a qualified appraiser who has a recognized appraiser designation from one of three professional organizations: the American Society of Appraisers, the Appraisers Association of America, or the International Society of Appraisers. The appraiser will require documentation of the work. Requirements include a good quality image of the work, purchase information - seller, date, price - dimensions, signature information, and the provenance of the piece, which includes the

institutions will require the same information. The allowability of the deduction is dependent on satisfaction of these requirements so it's important that the appraiser meets all the criteria.

If you plan on taking the contribution as a tax deduction, the artwork must have been owned for



Richard Marquis, "Broken Grey #1" (1979), glass, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Leatrice S. and Melvin B. Eagle Collection, gift of Leatrice and Melvin Eagle. © Richard Marquis

at least one year. Pay close attention to negotiating the terms of the gift document and check with tax accountants familiar with the issues. Institutions prefer to minimize any restrictions and explicit requirements for the work. Sale of your work by the institution may void the deductibility of the contribution. A tax professional should advise you on this and other questions that may arise.

Fashioning the future of your collection can bring both joy and relief. Art exploration, collection, and stewardship have been an important part of your life. Finding an institution to receive your works can be an incredibly rewarding experience. Don't hesitate - network, be organized, and be bold in seeking future stewards and places for your beloved objects to be enjoyed by others!

A MOMENTOUS HOARD: A LIFE OF *Love and Craft*

By Heath Ballowe, Historian, collector, educator and MA student at the Bard Graduate Center, studying Decorative Art, Design History and Material Culture.

Much has been written about art collectors, and much has been said about the long-time Philadelphia collectors Vicente Lim and Robert Tooe. In 2004, Helen Drutt English wrote in *American Craft Magazine*, "Like collectors before them, Vicente Lim and Robert Tooe hold the reigns of history, as they pursue an affinity with the art of their time." Seventeen years later, their commitment to preserving the legacy of 20th century American craft has come to represent more than the wondrous possibilities of art and ingenuity. The collection embodies the love these two men had for each other and the art they revered.

With the media's constant coverage of the record-breaking auction prices being paid for contemporary art it is hard to comprehend that the vast majority of art collectors are real people, with real jobs, who live average lives. That case rings

even more true when it comes to the demographics of art collectors in Philadelphia. Vicente, a graduate of Thomas Jefferson University who works in an area hospital, and Robert, once a US Postal Supervisor, were never grouped in with the high society collectors tripping over themselves to pay a record-breaking price for a work of art. They always were modest collectors who understood the important cultural legacy of visual art and saved their pennies for the opportunity to live with beautiful handmade objects.

In the early 1980s, Lim and Tooe started their collection small, collecting inexpensive prints and drawings, but it was not long before they were both seduced by the endless possibilities of art in clay. Vicente, in particular, was taken by the work of renowned ceramic sculptural artist, Viola Frey (1933-2004). So, when he made a trip to her studio





Photos of the Vicente Lim and Robert Tooley courtesy the author.

he brought back one of her masterpieces, *Woman with Orange Hands*, not even stopping to consider that the small home they lived in at the time was not equipped to display the larger than life-size sculpture. Vicente and Bob did not panic when the ceilings in their home were not high enough to fit her massive eight foot scale. They simply made the obvious choice to them at the time; they modified their home to fit the sculpture.

Eventually, Vicente and Robert saved up enough money to purchase a home that could accommodate *Woman With Orange Hands*, which also made it possible for them to grow their collection even larger, as well as allowed their passion to expand beyond just the work itself. Their ferocious desire to understand the history of the art they had surrounded themselves with drove them to read every magazine, visit every exhibition and read every book about contemporary ceramics they could get their hands on. What started out as merely documenting the provenance of the Lim/Tooley Collection has become a massive compilation of ephemera, cataloguing the history of American craft. Over the years, Vicente has acquired an encyclopedic comprehension of the history of ceramics. In a field of

study that often seems separate from the rest of the art historical canon, Vicente's extensive body of knowledge has become a valuable resource for historians and artists. This has garnered him a substantial social media following.

In recent years, as square footage in their home has seemingly evaporated, Vicente and Bob greatly decreased their rate of collecting. They continued but chose to add only a few pieces here and there, comprising mostly of works they believe managed to slip through their fingers the first go round. Their role as *contemporary collectors* has shifted to *stewards of a historical collection*. They have generously chosen to become mentors to the next generation of art collectors by employing the legacy they have acquired as a teaching tool and loaning works to exhibitions and using their experience to teach aspiring collectors how to begin.

As someone fortunate to get to know these two incredible men, it is difficult to not become inspired by their passion and commitment to American craft and the art community in Philadelphia. Sadly, Vicente has carried out what he and Robert began together by himself since 2018. However, we can all be certain that they, and their collection, will continue to inspire for generations to come.

THE LEGACY OF PAUL J. SMITH

ARTIST, CURATOR,
MAD MUSEUM
DIRECTOR

By Samantha De Tilio,
Curator of Collections,
Museum of Arts & Design



Director of the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, Paul J. Smith, addressing an audience at the First World Congress of Craftsmen, Columbia University, New York, 1964. Photo courtesy American Craft Council Library & Archives

When remembering Paul J. Smith, it's impossible to untwine his professional legacy from the history of the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) and its collection. Smith became involved in the institution during its earliest years and went on to become the Museum's longest-tenured Director, setting the tone for the curatorial and educational programming for decades to come.

Smith's association with the Museum of Arts and Design (then the Museum of Contemporary Crafts)

began in 1956, when David Campbell invited him to participate in the Museum's inaugural exhibition, *Craftsmanship in a Changing World*. At that time, Smith had also participated in the American Craft Council's "Young Americans" competitions and exhibitions in 1954, 1956, and 1958. When Campbell became Director of MAD in 1960, Smith followed; he served first as Assistant to the Director (1960–62), then Assistant Director (1962–63), and finally Director of the Museum (1963–87).

Smith's tenure as Director was clearly marked by experimentation, inquisitiveness, and community participation. When the museum opened in 1956, it was the only institution in the country to focus on contemporary craft, and in the 1960s, when Smith

took the helm, the nascent American studio craft movement was in one of its most exciting periods. The decade's confluence of artistic creativity, social radicalism, and cultural participation provided a ripe atmosphere for Smith's efforts to document the field through historical surveys, experimental projects, material investigations, and explorations into the relationship between art, craft, and design.

Numerous artists now central to the movement, including legends Peter Voulkos, one of the most influential ceramic artists of the 20th century, and Harvey Littleton, a leading figure in the studio glass movement, had their first museum shows at MAD; for many, the exhibitions also marked their first professional showing in New York City. In a cultural landscape devoid of craft galleries, the Museum provided a launchpad for artists to establish careers and realize projects—a function that MAD still fulfills through the Artist Studios program and the Burke Prize, among other initiatives.

Smith's exhibitions and programs consistently broke barriers and embraced avant-garde perspectives in art. He disrupted the traditional "no touch" rule of museums through projects such as *Feel It* (1969), which transformed the MAD's main floor into a maze of hanging plastic strips for the visitor to navigate, discovering objects through touch. In 1970, the Viennese collective Haus-Rucker-Co created an installation for the museum, consisting of an inflated air mattress with large balls for visitors to jump on and play with. Looking back on this era of experimentation, Smith commented, "A lot of this reflected the whole spirit of the sixties, of being open and trying new things. It was very much related to the happenings and the be-ins and people connections, and I think it didn't seem out of place in the context of other things that were going on at the time." Simultaneous to these experimental projects, Smith curated exhibitions that would become historical touchstones for the field, most notably *Objects: USA* (1969).

Arguably, the history of craft in the United States cannot be discussed without considering the legacy of *Objects: USA*, which was the first survey of the studio craft movement and tripled MAD's nascent permanent collection. Smith was the consulting curator for the exhibition—initiated by gallerist Lee Nordness and sponsored by the SC Johnson Company—which included over 300 artworks from across the country, and traveled to 22 museums nationwide and 11 internationally. A variety of supplementary elements were produced in association with the exhibition, such as mail-order catalogs in which exhibiting artists could sell works. In 1970, ABC aired the associated documentary

With These Hands: The Rebirth of the American Craftsman, featuring five of the exhibiting artists. Hundreds of thousands of people saw the exhibition globally, and it had an immeasurable and ongoing effect on the museum, the artists, and the field. Looking back on the landmark exhibition, Smith said, "The idea was to put together a collection that would portray the vast range of outstanding work throughout the country. We decided early on to honor the established and important artists of the older generation and to include some of the most experimental new work by young emerging artists, if they were accomplished in what they were doing."

Today, MAD's permanent collection includes more than 3,200 objects created by nearly 1,600 artists from close to 30 countries. Many of the original acquisitions—126 artworks—from *Objects USA* that transformed our understanding and expectations of art are on view in an ongoing exhibition titled *Craft Front & Center* (May 20, 2021 - February 13, 2022). Today, these works continue to remind us of Paul Smith's significant legacy and his contributions to the field. His endless enthusiasm, dedicated craft advocacy, and generous spirit remains unmatched and will continue to inspire generations of collectors and the craft curious public well into the future.



Installation view of *Objects: USA* featuring "Four-Unit Module" by Stephen James Kaltenbach (center), "Pitter-Podder" by Patti Warashina (foreground left), "Form earthenware" by Hui Ka Kwong (center), "Allegory of Three Men" by Dorian Zachai (background on wall), "Mondo Reflecto" by Howard Kottler (center right), Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York, 1972. Photo courtesy American Craft Council Library & Archives.



Installation view of *Objects: USA* featuring "Couch and Chair with Landscape and Cows" (1966-67) by Richard Shaw (front), Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York, 1972. Photo courtesy the American Craft Council Library & Archives



Installation view of *Craft Front & Center* featuring "Couch and Chair with Landscape and Cows" (1966-67) by Richard Shaw (front) and "Pitter-Podder" by Patti Warashina (left). Photo by Jaimianne Jacobin.

CONTEMPORARY CRAFT BUILDS A HOME ON *Midwest* MAIN STREET

By Bruce Peplich,
Executive Director
and Curator of
collections at the
Racine Art Museum



"Center Fracture" (2011) by Mary Giles. Racine Art Museum, Promised Gift of Jim Harris. Photography by Petronella J. Ytsma

Racine, Wisconsin is known as home to the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed SC Johnson Administration Building. It has also gained fame as a center for contemporary craft, since the community is also home to the Racine Art Museum (RAM) which houses the the largest and most significant contemporary craft collection in North America, with more than 9,500 objects.

RAM's parent, the Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, opened 80 years ago with significant holdings of Works Project Administration (WPA) works on paper, establishing the museum's first focus. In 1989, the museum created a second specialization in contemporary craft, based on its popularity in the museum's exhibitions. Responding to this announcement in 1991, local collector and supporter, Karen Johnson Boyd, donated 200 works by important figures in ceramics, basketry, and art

jewelry. This gift attracted donors from across the US, building a nationally significant collection by the mid-1990s. This cultural asset led to the creation of RAM as a second campus in downtown Racine to present these objects.

RAM collects broadly, representing multiple generations of artists with regional, national, and international reputations to assemble an accurate record of the activity that has taken place in the craft field since the 1960s. The museum also collects leading figures in-depth from throughout their careers, establishing archive collections that document the development of their concepts over time or over a specific body of work. *Collection Focus* is an annual exhibition series devoted to an artist represented in the collection by more than 20 pieces. In the last decade, artists including Dorothy Gill Barnes, Mary Giles, Sergei Isupov



"Mountain/Lake Brooch" (1996) by Harold O'Connor. Racine Art Museum, Gift of Laurie Waters. Photography by Jon Bolton.

and Michael Lucero have been featured. These shows function as small-scale career surveys and are accompanied by 20-page illustrated *Study Guides* that contain critical essays and an interview with the featured artist.

When RAM opened in 2003 on Main Street, its holdings numbered less than 3,000 objects. Since then, the collection has more than tripled to over 11,000 pieces gifted by collectors living in over 32 different states. More than half of these works are in craft media. While RAM was created as a home to this nationally significant craft collection, it also continues to collect works on paper. The museum's galleries are dedicated to changing temporary exhibitions; currently, 90% of the content is selected from its holdings. Many of these shows combine most of the media—both two- and three-dimensional—that RAM collects. This tactic places craft within the context of painting and sculpture movements of the same time period to demonstrate what these works have in common rather than how they may differ.

RAM's craft collection includes functional, sculptural, and decorative works made from a variety of media both traditional and not. The largest component is ceramics, while the second largest holding is art jewelry created in precious and found materials. Its textile collection features one of the largest contemporary basketry collections in the country, as well as fiber-based installations and art to wear. RAM's glass holdings contain recent sculptures and a representation of the studio glass movement focusing on 1965-1990. There are archival representations of artists known for turned wood and handmade furniture. RAM also has a large collection of jewelry, vessels, and furniture employing polymer.

RAM makes use of its close proximity to Chicago and Milwaukee by attracting people from across the region and over half of its 50,000 annual visitors come from outside Racine. The museum seeks to have a positive effect on the national discourse surrounding craft, while serving its local audience. Racine has historically been a center of skilled manufacturing. The community respects the work of the hand, connecting the contemporary craft artists with people and their families who continue to employ handwork in their jobs and hobbies. The presence of recognizable functional items, including teapots, goblets, jewelry, and clothing—some with provocative perspectives—allows guests a chance to connect with them through a familiar type of object. Because craft, at its core, represents numerous voices, there are opportunities to invite racially diverse audiences to participate in RAM's exhibition and education programs. In tandem with the growth of its holdings, the percentage of people of color participating in RAM's education programs for children and families has grown from 8% in 2008 to 40% in 2019. In addition, a 2019 survey determined that 43% of the artists in the collection are women—a greater percentage than at many larger art museums. Critical efforts are underway to directly increase representation of artists of color in the collection.

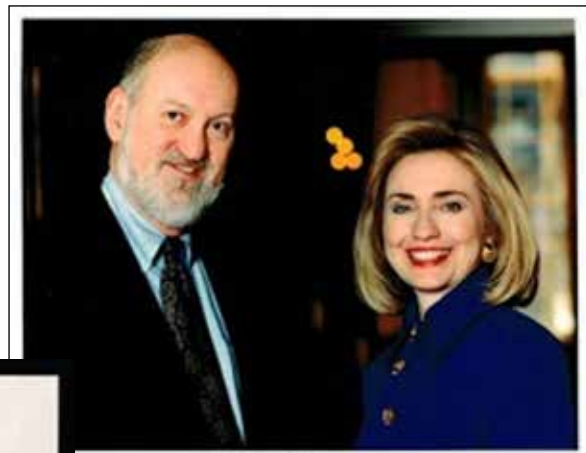
The most striking aspect of this growing national asset is that it is located in a city of 78,000. RAM's education programs use its collection to facilitate conversations between people to increase levels of empathy and understanding. The comfort people feel with these media ushers them into this conversation and RAM is proud to initiate and continue this dialogue.



"Desk (Silver Leaf Desk)" (1967) by Wendell Castle. Racine Art Museum, Gift of SC Johnson in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of RAM's Wustum Museum of Fine Arts. Photography by Michael Tropea

WHITE HOUSE *Craft* COLLECTION

By Michael Monroe, Former Curator-in-Charge of the Smithsonian Renwick Gallery and Curator of The White House Collection of American Crafts



Publicity photos of The White House Collection of American Craft, courtesy the author. Pictured right, "Yellow Pair" by Dante Marioni, accompanied by the exhibition poster and publication. Pictured above, Michael Monroe and Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The unique collection of 72 objects in the White House Collection of American Crafts was inspired by the 1993 yearlong nationwide celebration of American crafts. Formed with the encouragement and support of President William Jefferson Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, it was displayed throughout the public spaces beginning in December



by their makers; four were gifts of the artists' patrons.

The White House Collection of American Crafts ranges from utilitarian pieces to purely decorative and sculptural forms including such artists as Toots Zynsky, Dale Chihuly, Cliff Lee, Mara Superior, Sam Maloof, Kari Lonning, Albert Paley, Nathan

Youngblood, Ellen Kochansky and James C. Watkins.

The challenge was how to carefully integrate contemporary craft into the period settings of the White House among paintings, sculpture, antique furniture, decorative arts and memorabilia of historical significance. A handsome book was published by Harry N. Abrams to coincide with the opening of the exhibition. The collection was the first ever online art exhibition to be presented by the Smithsonian.

Following its White House venue the Smithsonian Museum of American Art hosted the collection in April of 1995 prior to its five yearlong national tour to such museums as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Tampa Museum of Art, Peabody Essex Museum and the Museum of Arts and Design.



1993 and remained on view until March 1995 with an attendance of over one million viewers.

In April 1993, I was then Curator-in-Charge of the Renwick Gallery, and was summoned to explore the concept of how best to honor the extraordinary contemporary achievements of some of our nation's finest artists at the White House. Key pieces from an outstanding group of artists at different stages in their careers were chosen for the excellence of their vision, technique and whose media of choice included the disciplines of, ceramics, fiber, glass, metal or wood. Most of the objects were donated

SAVE THE DATES

SEPTEMBER 2021

- 9/22 JRA Craft Weekend auction
with Rago Auctions
9/30 Annapolis, MD Day Trip

OCTOBER 2021

- 10/29 - 31 JRA Craft Weekend!

NOVEMBER 2021

- 11/14 Caucus Member Collection
Tour with Patty Alper
11/18 Baltimore, MD Day Trip
11/20 - 28 JRA Day Online

DECEMBER 2021

- 12/4 JRA Day in-person



No Tricks, Just Treats

JRA Craft Weekend
October 29 - 31, 2021

**Honoring the 2021
Masters of the Medium**

Consuelo Jimenez Underwood
David Harper Clemons
Preston Singletary
Sergei Isupov
Wendy Maruyama



MEMBERSHIP

RENEW OR JOIN TODAY

WWW.JRA.ORG

Pictured above: "Still Life with Detritus" (2013) by Beth Lipman. Racine Art Museum, Gift of Kohler Foundation, Inc. Photography: Robb Quinn.