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“BREAKING TRADITION” FEATURES GENRE-DEFYING DECORATIVE ARTS
at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

Breaking Tradition: Contemporary Approaches to the Decorative Arts

October 15, 2020 – January 3, 2021

Front Gallery

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

4848 Main Street, Houston, TX 77002

Hours & Admission

Beginning October 15th: Open Thursday through Saturday, 10 AM – 5 PM. Closed on major holidays. Admission is free. Reservations are required. Visitors must wear masks and practice social distancing.

(HOUSTON, TX) October 13, 2020 – This spring, Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (HCCC) presents *Breaking Tradition: Contemporary Approaches to the Decorative Arts*. The exhibition features three artists—Sophie Glenn, Steven Young Lee, and Beth Lipman—who challenge the dominant cultural narratives of the decorative arts through unconventional furniture, porcelain, photography, and cast-metal pieces.

Historically, the decorative arts prize a strict hierarchy of material and technique set forth by a select group of arts professionals and collectors. HCCC Curator Kathryn Hall says the artists in this exhibition disrupt assumptions about the genre's history, by making it relatable to a broader audience: “By recontextualizing traditional archetypes, patterns, and decorative motifs in a modern world, these three artists look critically at how they identify with these cultural artifacts.”

Furnituremaker Sophie Glenn challenges conventions of traditional fine furniture through her innovative use of material and technique. She creates *trompe l’oeil* pieces from metal that closely resemble historically revered archetypes often associated with fine woodworking. In *Purple Reign* (2019), she welds steel into the form of a Windsor-style bench, a common piece of wooden furniture with turned spindles that create the seatback. Glenn paints the steel and then rusts away its surface to give the appearance of a painted wooden bench that has worn over time.

First trained as a studio potter, Steven Young Lee throws beautifully proportioned Korean- and Chinese-style vessels that slump and bend during their first firing inside the kiln. In pieces like *Gourd Vase with Bats and Clouds* (2019), he paints deconstructed porcelain forms with his own interpretation of traditional decorative motifs that draw from popular culture. As a first-generation American, descended from Korean immigrants, Lee utilizes his work to address issues related to cultural heritage, identity, and a sense of belonging in the Eurocentric portrayal of this genre.

Beth Lipman references the rich visual language of the decorative arts in her installations, sculptures, and photography. In her *Ephemera* series (2010-2013), she replicates objects found in 17th-century, Dutch still-life paintings in glass form and later photographs these installations to capture a specific moment in time. The series draws strong parallels between the Dutch Golden Age and the current era of capitalism as a way of exposing the vanity that lies behind excessive wealth and materialism. She also explores the dissonance between civilization and the natural world through photography in the *Alone and the Wilderness* series (2014) and through cast-metal dioramas in her *Distill* series (2015).

Breaking Tradition: Contemporary Approaches to the Decorative Arts is curated by HCCC Curator Kathryn Hall and supported in part by a grant from the Furniture Society.

Sophie Glenn

Originally from New York City, Sophie Glenn is a furniture maker who serves as a visiting assistant professor of sculpture at Mississippi State University in Starkville, MS. She holds an MFA from San Diego State University in furniture design and woodworking (2017) and a BFA in sculpture from SUNY-Purchase (2012). Her work has been exhibited nationally. In 2018, she received Best-in-Show at the Best of Tennessee Craft Exhibition and was a LEAP Award Finalist for Contemporary Craft in Pittsburgh, among many other awards. She has participated in residencies at Appalachian Center for Craft and Arrowmont School of Crafts, and she was a Windgate Fellow at the Vermont Studio Center. In June of 2020, Glenn will begin an artist residency at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft.

Steven Young Lee

Originally from Chicago, Steven Young Lee is a ceramicist and has served as the resident artist director at the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts in Helena, Montana, since 2006. He holds an MFA (2004) and a BFA (1998) in ceramics from Alfred University. From 2005 - 2006, he was a visiting professor at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver, B.C. From 2004 to 2005, he participated in a one-year cultural and educational exchange in China. His work has been widely exhibited nationally in solo and group exhibitions. Lee's work is included in the collections of the Smithsonian Museum of Art, the Daum Museum of Contemporary Art, the Four Seasons Hotel in Seoul, Korea, and in other private collections.

Beth Lipman

Residing in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin, Beth Lipman studied at the Massachusetts College of Art and Pilchuck Glass School before receiving a BFA in glass and fibers from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia. She has served in many different roles in the arts, including education director at Urban Glass (Brooklyn, NY), head of the glass department at Worcester Center for Crafts (Worcester, MA), studio director of education and artist services at the Creative Glass Center of America at Wheaton Arts (Millville, NJ), and arts/industry coordinator at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center (Sheboygan, WI). She has received numerous awards, including American Craft Council Fellow (2018), Virginia Groot Foundational Grant (2014), Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship (2013), Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2012), and United States Artists Berman Bloch Fellow (2011). Lipman has held residencies at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center (WI), Museum of Glass (WA), and the Corning Museum of Glass (NY) and has taught at institutions across the United States. Her work can be found in the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, D.C.), Brooklyn Museum of Art (NY), Corning Museum of Glass (NY), Museum of Art and Design (NY), Chrysler Museum of Art (VA), Museum of Glass (WA), and Rhode Island School of Design (RI), among others.

About Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (HCCC) is a nonprofit visual arts center dedicated to advancing education about the process, product, and history of craft. HCCC provides exhibition, studio, and garden spaces to support the work of local and national artists and serves as a resource for artists, educators and the

community at large.

Beginning October 15th, HCCC is open limited hours: Thursday through Saturday, 10 AM – 5 PM. Timed reservations are required. Before visiting, the public should visit the website at www.crafthouston.org to make a reservation and view the complete list of visitor guidelines, including the requirement to wear face masks and practice social distancing throughout the building.

HCCC is located in the Museum District at 4848 Main Street. Admission is free. Free parking is available directly behind the facility, off Rosedale and Travis Street. HCCC is three blocks south of Wheeler Ave. MetroRail station on Main Street. Closed the following holidays: Easter, July 4th, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

HCCC is supported by individual donors and members and funded in part by The Brown Foundation; Houston Endowment, Inc.; the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance; Texas Commission on the Arts; the National Endowment for the Arts, the Kinder Foundation; the Morgan Foundation; Windgate Charitable Foundation; and the Wortham Foundation. HCCC is a member of the Houston Museum District and the Midtown Arts District.

For more information, call 713-529-4848 or visit www.crafthouston.org. Find HCCC on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram @CraftHouston.

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