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FORMS OF INHERITANCE: THE WORK OF ANNA MAYER

On View January 30 – May 8, 2021, at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

Forms of Inheritance: The Work of Anna Mayer

January 30 – May 8, 2021

Main Gallery

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

4848 Main Street, Houston, TX 77002

Hours & Admission

Current hours: Thursday through Saturday, 10 AM – 5 PM. Holiday schedule for 2020: HCCC will be closed for Thanksgiving Day, November 26, and from Christmas Eve - New Year's Day, December 24 - January 1, 2021. Admission is free. Reservations are required. Visitors must wear masks and practice social distancing.

(HOUSTON, TX) December 9, 2020 – This spring, Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (HCCC) presents *Forms of Inheritance: The Work of Anna Mayer*, an exhibition of ceramic and bronze sculptures that explores humanity's reckoning with mortality and demonstrates the fragility and fierceness of the natural world.

Anna Mayer's social and sculptural practice explores the impact of humanity throughout geologic time, with a focus on the temporal relationship between humans and the land beyond an individual's life span. Her work in the exhibition reflects deeply upon the realities of death and decay. Drawing upon a language of mourning and burial practices, she uses materials like raw clay and porcelain dinnerware to communicate a narrative of what remains when people die and what is left for others to inherit. By grinding pieces of dinnerware she inherited and mixing the bits with raw clay to give it a new texture and purpose, she creates sculptures that appear to seep and bubble-up from the ground. These ceramic works are juxtaposed with a pair of bronze hands and feet that are cast from a composite of Mayer's own body, along with the fingers and toes of others from communities in Los Angeles and Houston, where the artist has lived. By combining attributes from different people to form a new body, Mayer identifies a need for a society that relies on the collective strength of individuals.

Mayer's work also bears witness to extreme weather and humans' effects on the planet. In her practice, she incorporates raw wild clay, collected from areas of drought, urban construction, and geothermal activity, from Texas to California, and uses analogue firing techniques, which do not require electricity or gas. The artist is fascinated by the transformative power of fire to both incinerate and create, giving new life to repurposed materials. In 2008, as part of her project, *Fireful of Fear*, Mayer placed 12 clay tablets in the canyons in and around Malibu, California, to be fired by eventual wildfires. Since then, six of those tablets have been fired by wildfires. She describes the surface of those wildfired pieces as, "a smoky swirl of ash and earth, through which the carved words of the sculpture speak, as if through a fog." In the last decade, the pieces have become markers for global warming, as wildfires around the world have increased in number and intensity.

Through this ongoing project, Mayer welcomes the unknown and recognizes the complex relationship humans have with the environment and disaster. The exhibition showcases various aspects of *Fireful of Fear*, including some of the wildfired tablets, as well as photographs taken at the sites where they were buried and annual letters written by the artist to mark the project's anniversary.

HCCC Curator Kathryn Hall comments, "In a culture that privileges autonomy and self-reliance, Mayer's sculpture offers a new way of being that strikes a balance between communal action and individual agency. Her work provides us with an understanding of the shared responsibility that we have to care for the world around us and those that inhabit it."

Forms of Inheritance: The Work of Anna Mayer is curated by HCCC Curator Kathryn Hall.

About Anna Mayer

Anna Mayer's practice is sculptural and social, with an emphasis on hand-built ceramics. Her methodology emerges from enacting formative site-specific projects in Southern California, an interest in the relationship between speech and consciousness, and extensive engagement with the various social practices and feminist histories of Los Angeles, CA and Houston, TX. Her work has been exhibited at Night Gallery (CA), Galerie Catherine Bastide (Brussels, Belgium), Ballroom Marfa (TX), Kendall Koppe (UK), Commonwealth & Council (CA), Klaus Von Nichtssagend (NY), Machine Project (CA), Hammer Museum (CA), Luckman Gallery at Cal State (CA), and Pomona Museum (CA). In 2014, she, along with UK artist Laura Aldridge, enacted a large-scale social sculpture at the Glasgow International Biennial. In addition to her solo practice, Mayer works with Jemima Wyman as part of the collaborative duo, CamLab, which has staged events and exhibited in Los Angeles at MOCA, the Hammer Museum, and Armory Center for the Arts. Most recently, CamLab enacted a large-scale social-practice project at the University of Houston. Mayer was the assistant director of the LA-based Institute For Figuring for nearly a decade. She is currently the assistant professor of sculpture at the University of Houston.

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.

HCCC is currently open limited hours: Thursday through Saturday, 10 AM – 5 PM. Holiday schedule for 2020: HCCC will be closed for Thanksgiving Day, November 26, and from Christmas Eve - New Year's Day, December 24 - January 1, 2021. Timed reservations are required. Before visiting, the public should visit the website to make reservations 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.

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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