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**HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENTS, FANTASY, AND COSPLAY INSPIRE
EXTRAORDINARY ARMOR MAKING BY TEXAS ARTISTS**

Suited Up: Contemporary Armor Making in Texas at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

Suited Up: Contemporary Armor Making in Texas

June 5 – September 11, 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. Admission is free. Reservations are required.

Visitors must wear masks and practice social distancing. Visit www.crafthouston.org for the latest information.

(HOUSTON, TX) March 30, 2021 – This summer, Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (HCCC) proudly presents *Suited Up: Contemporary Armor Making in Texas*. The exhibition, featuring suits of armor inspired by historical re-enactments and iconic pop-culture warriors, explores the extraordinary craftsmanship behind armor making in the Lone Star State. Showcasing everything from traditional metalwork and leatherwork to 3D-printed and innovative do-it-yourself suits, the works on view exemplify the vibrant and diverse spectrum of fantastical armorers in Texas. Their handmade attire, often fashioned from favorite media figures or historical designs, represents an integral component of their practice.

Various communities of fantasy and re-enactment have kept age-old armor-making techniques alive, adding many unique chapters in recent years to the histories of these techniques. Self-taught William Brunson, of Dragon Heart Armory, produces historically inspired metal armor pieces, many of which have been used in real-life jousting tournaments at Renaissance festivals around the country. Based in Pottsville, Brunson hand crafts every part of Dragon Heart Armory's chainmail and metal armaments, producing pieces that are winsome, yet durable enough to take a beating while used in action on horseback.

San Antonio-based Michael Lane began fashioning armor in the 1970s after joining his local chapter of The Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), an international community organized around the study and recreation of mainly pre-17th-century European culture, with an emphasis on live-action, role-play combat scenarios. Initially, Lane found that there was little armor available that could survive armed combat. In response, he began designing battle-ready armor using common materials, ranging from steel cooking bowls that he fashioned into helmets to wire that he used to create chainmail. Many of his sturdy pieces have protected their wearers for decades.

The women behind Nyvedna Productions and Lutavia Cosplay harness their passion for popular film and video-game franchises, such as *Black Panther* and *Overwatch*, to create with faithful detail the suits of armor worn by their beloved characters. Self-identified as members of the cosplay community, they synthesize craftsmanship, skill-sharing, and ingenuity to share their love for what they do by encouraging anyone who is interested to break onto the scene by making their own costumes. Their designs incorporate digitally designed and printed fabrics, as well as 3D-printed accessories with beadwork and faux-finishing techniques, demonstrating a visual acuity for bringing their characters to life through their wares.

The exhibition's co-curators, Kathryn Hall and María-Elisa Heg, comment, "Although cosplay and re-enactment communities each have histories of engaging with craft, they have often been overlooked within the field. In particular, Texas has a strong representation of makers who carry on historic traditions of craft practice, while merging them with modern motifs and techniques, to create a new language of form and function that is entirely self-defined. The featured artists in this exhibition also wear their creations, giving them a deep understanding of the comfortability and wearability of these pieces. We are excited to recognize this talented group of makers who spark curiosity and wonder by bringing different realms of fantasy into physical form."

Suited Up: Contemporary Armor Making in Texas is co-curated by HCCC Curator Kathryn Hall and HCCC Curatorial Fellow María-Elisa Heg.

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. Timed reservations are required. Before visiting, the public should visit www.crafthouston.org 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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