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**CYDNEY PICKENS NAMED HCCC CURATORIAL FELLOW 2021-2024
Maria-Elisa Heg Transitions to Digital Content Manager**

(HOUSTON, TX) October 28, 2021 — Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (HCCC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Cydney Pickens as the next HCCC Curatorial Fellow. Pickens is a graduate of the Art History program at the University of Houston and has previously worked at HCCC as a curatorial intern, assisting with research and exhibition installations, and as a visitor services associate, leading tours and educating the public about the artworks on view. She also served as a gallery assistant at Foelber Pottery and most recently worked in the fast-paced world of Gallery One Auctions.

Generously supported by the Windgate Foundation, the Center's Curatorial Fellowship Program trains and supports the next generation of curators in the field of contemporary craft. Fellows join HCCC for a three-year term, working alongside the curator in the development, organization, and implementation of the organization's exhibitions program, as well as partnering with staff across departments, in support of education and artist residency initiatives. Former fellows have taken leading curatorial positions in the field, including those at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Corning Museum of Glass; the Center for Craft (formerly the Center for Craft, Creativity, and Design); and Lawndale Art Center, as well as HCCC.

As the new fellow, Pickens has already begun working with HCCC Curator Kathryn Hall to assist with research for future exhibitions, meet with HCCC resident artists about displaying their artwork, and even curate an upcoming exhibition with ClayHouston for this winter. Hall noted, "We are delighted to have Cydney return to our team at HCCC. She brings an excitement for the history of craft and material culture, as well as a visionary spirit to the position, and we look forward to working with Cydney to hone her talents as an emerging curator." Pickens, whose interests include African Art and collecting vintage glassware and Black memorabilia, is enthusiastic about her new role: "During my time as curatorial fellow, I am excited to highlight the influence of heritage and tradition on contemporary craft. As best said by Maya Angelou, 'You can't really know where you're going until you know where you have been.'"

Maria-Elisa Heg, who just completed her curatorial fellowship, has made a lasting impact on the work of HCCC. During her tenure, she curated eight exhibitions, including *Drawn to the Work: Illustration and Craft in Conversation*; *9ja Vision: The Work of Joy O. Ude*; *Suited Up: Contemporary Armor Making in Texas (co-curated with Kathryn Hall)*; *Copy Culture: Zines Made and Shared*, which is currently on view; and four iterations of the *In Residence* show. She also worked with the Center's resident artists to curate displays of

their work for the Artist Hall and played a crucial role during the rise of the pandemic by stepping in to produce virtual programming as the entire organization shifted its operations.

In fact, because of her strong skill set and interest in communications and digital platforms, Heg won't be leaving HCCC. She has just begun the newly created position of digital content manager. Working as a member of the marketing and communications team, Heg will develop original programming content to be distributed digitally, broadening the organization's institutional voice and more effectively promoting its many offerings to the public by telling the story of HCCC as a unique and dynamic arts destination. Heg commented, "Being the curatorial fellow at HCCC was the best experience of my career. It is really amazing to look back and compare how intimidated I felt embarking on my first curatorial project with how proud I am of my current show, *Copy Culture: Zines Made and Shared*. Even though half of my fellowship was spent working while adjusting to the realities of a global pandemic, I continued to learn and grow alongside my incredible coworkers. I am thrilled to continue working with everyone and build more excitement for all the amazing things HCCC does in my new role as digital content manager."

About Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, 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 continues to serve as a treasured resource in the Houston arts community and the region by showcasing emerging and acclaimed artists in exhibitions, introducing visitors of all ages to contemporary craft through hands-on and virtual programming, and supporting the development of working artists through its artist residency program.

HCCC is open Tuesday - Saturday, 10 AM – 5 PM. Admission is free. Masks and social distancing are required inside the museum. Before visiting, the public should review the visitor guidelines at www.crafthouston.org. HCCC is located in the Museum District at 4848 Main Street, three blocks south of the Wheeler Ave. MetroRail station. Free parking is available directly behind the facility, off Rosedale and Travis 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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