HOUSTON CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY CRAFT

CRAFTTEXAS 2025

JUROR STATEMENT

It has been such an honor, and pleasure, to be invited to be the juror for *CraftTexas 2025* - not only to participate in this important triennial, but also for the fact that this edition will kick off the 25th anniversary celebrations for Houston Center for Contemporary Craft – and therefore I'm delighted to be supporting my wonderful colleague, and dear friend, Executive Director, Leila Cartier, and all her HCCC colleagues during this special year.

It was exhilarating (and a little daunting!) to review such a large, diverse, and high-quality roster of submissions – and it was a tough challenge to whittle down these outstanding entries to the almost fifty works that visitors will see on view in the exhibition. However, it has been wonderful to see these extraordinary objects coalesce into a series of interconnected, beguiling, and provocative narratives that I hope will do justice to the spectrum of craft practice and range of voices that exist across such an expansive and multi-faceted state such as Texas.

The works in the *CraftTexas 2025* exhibition demonstrate a powerful continuum of the histories and philosophies of craft, with many objects exemplifying a rigorous, yet thoughtful, application of materials and processes – and yet they also manage to provoke and subvert certain assumptions about craft's role within wider artistic practice, and how these objects speak to broader issues within our communities, and the world at large. As you walk through the gallery spaces, you will see works that riff of the traditions of trompe l'oeil ceramics; assemblages that hint at oblique references to Steampunk, or nod towards the work of artists such as Louise Nevelson and Brice Marden; and you will encounter vividly ambitious fiber works that feel like they envelop your field of vision like a Cinerama widescreen.

You will also be confronted with deeply personal works that examine themes such as domestic labor, collective memory loss, landscape and identity, or the tension between the individual and the communal. At a time when the world seems, almost every day, to be revealing new levels of conflict, trauma and chaos – the works selected in this exhibition offer a critical reminder of contemporary craft's wonderful gift of offering us a weighted anchor around which we might reorient ourselves, together with its powerful ability to act as a litmus test for the present day, and perhaps – as we look towards an uncertain future - its role as a seismograph for the society that is yet to come.

Abraham Thomas
July, 2025