

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CRAFT IN AMERICA: Expanding Traditions
July 22 – September 23, 2007
Nationally Touring Exhibition to Inaugurate
Programming at the new Museum of Contemporary Craft

With its Grand Re-opening set for July 22, the new Museum of Contemporary Craft is pleased to launch its programming with the nationally touring exhibition *CRAFT IN AMERICA: Expanding Traditions*. The exhibition has been organized by Craft in America, Inc., Los Angeles; curator Jo Lauria; and Curatorial Assistance Traveling Exhibitions (CATE), Pasadena. Beginning with the Industrial Revolution and continuing through the present, this important historical survey elucidates the dynamic evolution of the American craft movement. Including more than 100 objects that represent broad examples of artwork that is craft-based – either through media, technique or both – the exhibition presents a compelling selection of craft made in the past two centuries. This curated selection of objects recognizes many of the significant social, cultural, political and artistic contributions that have guided the development of craft in this country. “These innovative and vital objects will reveal how craft taps into, and shapes, wider cultural streams, flowing freely into the broader narrative of contemporary art,” states Carol Sauvion, Executive Director of *CRAFT IN AMERICA*.

The exhibition is one component of a landmark multi-media project that also includes a website, an illustrated companion book, and a three-part television documentary series that airs nationally on PBS May 30 – locally on Oregon Public Broadcasting. Audiences who watch the series and then visit Museum of Contemporary Craft from July 22–September 23, 2007 will have the opportunity to viscerally explore the materiality and form of these works, adding another layer of meaning to their experience of these objects and ideas.

Given the Pacific Northwest’s noted contribution to the American craft movement, and the creative hub that Museum of Contemporary Craft has been in the region for 70 continuous years, *CRAFT IN AMERICA: Expanding Traditions* was an inspired choice for the new Museum’s inaugural exhibition. “There is a trajectory of the American craft movement that has run parallel to avant-garde art movements for many decades. This exhibition examines this separate history, and sets the stage to understand craft today,” states Namita Gupta Wiggers, curator at Museum of Contemporary Craft.

Connections between objects in *CRAFT IN AMERICA: Expanding Traditions* and the Museum’s collection will be highlighted through a rotating installation of works by regional artists. “We chose to open with this exhibition because it provides a historical framework,” Wiggers explains, “In many ways, the first year of programming at our new site will build a foundation for conversations about craft.”

(OVER)

MAILING ADDRESS THROUGH JULY 1, 2007
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Museum of Contemporary Craft

After the Museum's Grand Re-opening with *CRAFT IN AMERICA: Expanding Traditions*, scheduled exhibitions will continue to expand audiences' engagement with craft. Some will push the boundaries of what defines craft – whether as a verb, a media-defined mode of art-making, or a historical movement. Others will honor specific makers and the contribution that their work has made to the history of craft. Still others will investigate new ideas being explored in craft as the field continues to evolve, frequently intersecting with art, architecture and design.

October 2007–March 2008; *The Living Room*; curated by Namita Gupta Wiggers. This exhibition debuts the re-installation of objects from the Museum's permanent collection, presented in a contemporary domestic setting. On one level of investigation, the installation will challenge typical notions of how a museum presents objects from its collection. On another, it will look at the intersection of historical objects within the context of a contemporary interior. *The Living Room* exhibition also coincides with the launch of a new book – the Museum's first publication devoted to its collection of regional craft-based objects that dates back to the 1940s and includes the work of important artists such as Rudy Autio, Frank Boyden, Ron Ho, Lee Kelly, Connie Kiener, Jack Lenor Larsen, Sam Maloof, Frances Senska, Lino Tagliapietra, Peter Voulkos and Patti Warashina.

November 2007–January 2008; *Eden Revisited: The Ceramic Art of Kurt Weiser*; organized by Peter Held, curator of the Ceramics Research Center at Arizona State University. This exhibition is a mid-career survey of this internationally renowned artist and educator. The objects included in this nationally touring exhibition reflect an examination of Weiser's stylistic development from the 1970s to the present; they illuminate what results when his skills merge as both a master painter of intricate narratives and an accomplished ceramist of traditional vessels.

January–March 2008; *Touching Warms the Art*; organized by Museum of Contemporary Craft; juried by Rebecca Scheer, Rachele Thiewes and Namita Gupta Wiggers. This exhibition intends to broaden the public's understanding and enjoyment of art jewelry and will provoke questions about art jewelry's typical presentation in museums. Painstaking craftsmanship and choice of materials often give art jewelry a value in the marketplace that acts as a barrier. With the general public prevented from "really" experiencing this art form, many of its inherent abstract messages go unnoticed. In this interactive exhibition, the work will come alive as the viewer becomes the wearer. The call to artists invites makers to put aside "preciousness" and create objects of adornment that can be freely worn and handled by museum audiences.

These exhibitions are a sampling of what the public can look forward to in the coming year at Museum of Contemporary Craft – other exhibitions being planned include: Ellen Lupton's *Exhibition in Print* for *Metalsmith* magazine; a retrospective of the legendary ceramist Ken Shores; an exhibition of work in glass to coincide with the Glass Art Society conference coming to Portland in 2008; and an exhibition investigating the intersection of craft and design, curated by Mara Holt Skov and Steven Skov Holt – co-authors of *Blobjects & Beyond: A New Fluidity in Design*.

At the new Museum of Contemporary Craft exhibitions are the springboard to guide audiences through multi-layered experiences with craft. Like a laboratory, objects and ideas will be investigated with equal rigor. The Museum will facilitate this type of energized inquiry via educational programs; publications; social events; and examples of contemporary craft that can be examined or collected in The Gallery – where one can purchase books and artwork by regional and national artists – thereby extending the museum experience into one's personal environment.

Museum of Contemporary Craft

CRAFT IN AMERICA: Expanding Traditions
July 22 – September 23, 2007

The images below, in addition to several others, are available as high-resolution jpg files. For access, please visit our press center at www.MuseumofContemporaryCraft.org/presscenter. If you would like to request additional images or receive more information, please contact:

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1. Exterior of the new Museum of Contemporary Craft, re-opening July 22 at 724 Northwest Davis Street in Portland, Oregon. Illustration courtesy of LRS Architects, Inc.

Selected images featured in *CRAFT IN AMERICA: Expanding Traditions*

2. George Nakashima. *Conoid Bench with Back*. Designed: c. 1961. Production date of this example: 1974. American black walnut, hickory, East Indian rosewood. 31 x 113 x 40 inches. Image courtesy of Mira Nakashima.

3. Jan Yager. *Tiara of Useful Knowledge. City Flora: The Philadelphia Series*, 2006. Transforms into: 8 Brooches, 2 Stick Pins, Tie Tack, Pendant, and Headband. Oxidized Sterling Silver, 18k and 14k Gold. Photo by: Jack Ramsdale.

4. Jamez and Einar de la Torre. *Italian Style*. 2006. Blown glass, mixed media. 34 x 15 x 14 inches.

5. Chungchi Choo. *Decanter*, 1980. Silver-plated electroformed copper, 5 7/8 x 4 7/8 x 8 1/8 inches. Photo by R. H. Hensleigh and Tim Thayer, courtesy of Cranbrook Art Museum.

6. Peter Voulkos. *Untitled (Stack)*, 1975. Stoneware and porcelain, 39 x 10 1/2 x 10 1/2 inches. Scripps College, Claremont, CA. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Maurer and Courtesy of the Voulkos & Co. Catalogue Project.

7. Teri Greeves (Kiowa). *Prayer Blanket*, 2006. Beaded hide and fiber, 52 x 51 1/2 inches. Photo by James Hart.