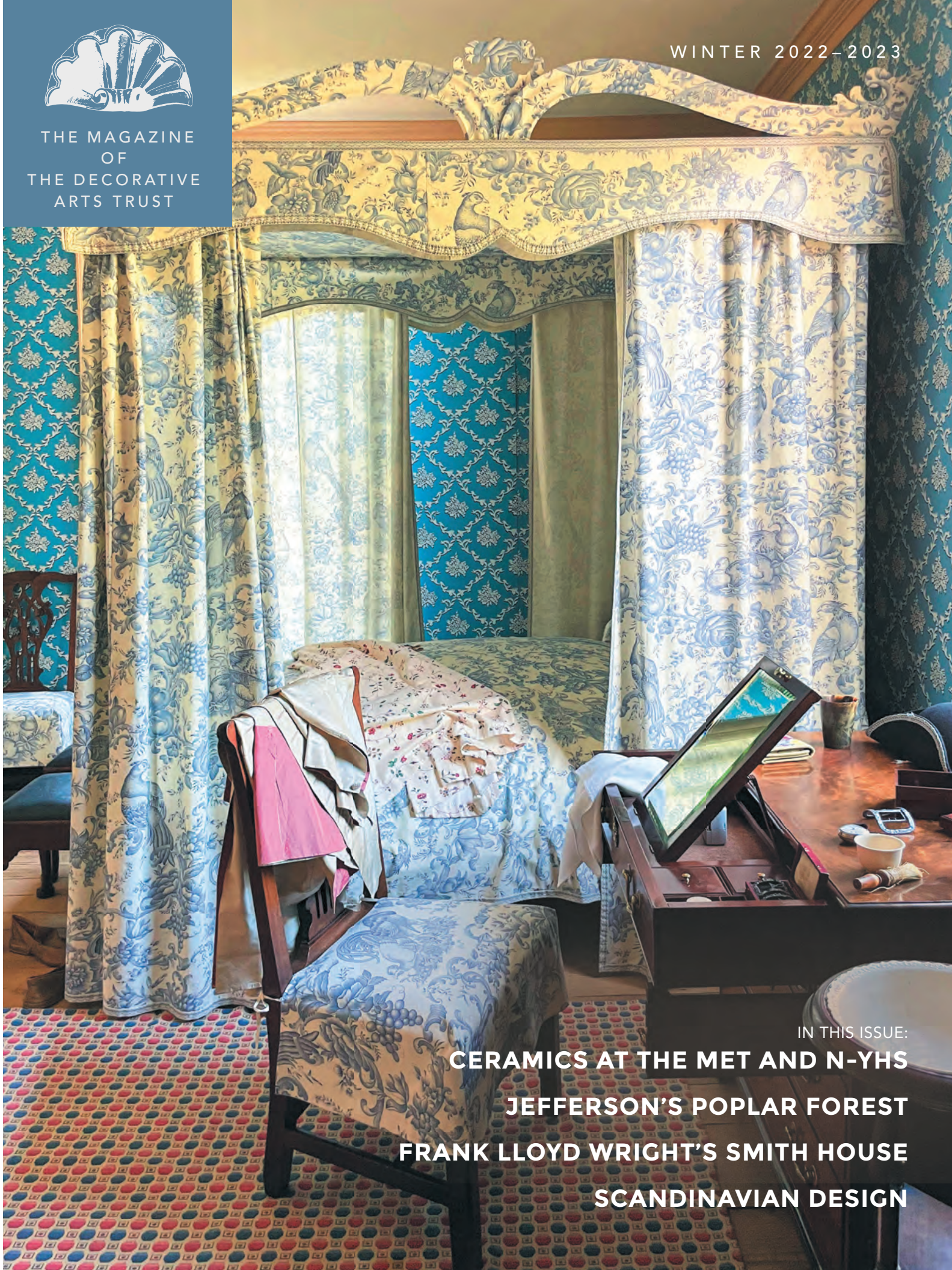




THE MAGAZINE
OF
THE DECORATIVE
ARTS TRUST

WINTER 2022-2023



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CERAMICS AT THE MET AND N-YHS
JEFFERSON'S POPLAR FOREST
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S SMITH HOUSE
SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN

THE DECORATIVE ARTS TRUST

The mission of the Decorative Arts Trust, a non-profit organization, is to promote and foster the appreciation and study of the decorative arts. We achieve our mission through:

- *Exchanging information through domestic and international programming;*
- *Collaborating and partnering with museums and preservation organizations; and*
- *Underwriting internships, research grants, and scholarships for graduate students and young professionals.*

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The downstairs bedroom at Williamsburg's Everard House (exterior shown here at right), the focus of a multi-year research and restoration project visited by the Trust as part of a Pre-Symposium Optional Tour in advance of the Fall Symposium.



CENTURIES OF FORTITUDE AND FANTASY:

Munich's Nymphenburg Porcelain Manufactory

by Catherine Carlisle

THE DECORATIVE ARTS TRUST'S VISIT to Germany's southeastern state of Bavaria was replete with Baroque grandeur and Rococo drama. From official royal residences to countryside schlosses, our tour covered the gamut of prevailing elite tastes in architecture and decorative arts throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

We began in Bavaria's capital, Munich, a medieval market town that grew steadily along with the power of the inimitable Wittelsbach dynasty. Over the family's rule of more than 700 years, the city witnessed the construction of numerous civic, ecclesiastical, and domestic buildings across the kingdom of Bavaria, including the Residenz, the official royal palace in Munich, and Schloss Nymphenburg, a summer palace built outside the city. The Wittelsbach family stoked industry and artistry, including music, theater, and porcelain production, until the dynasty came to an end in 1918 when Ludwig III renounced his throne and title. In the following years, right-wing political fervor grew, and the city became a target of Allied bombing raids during World War II. Over forty percent of the city of Munich was destroyed, including much of the grand Residenz in the city center. Schloss Nymphenburg, on the other hand, was distant enough

to avoid a direct strike and thus survives as an impressive vestige of Bavaria's palatial history. What is even more remarkable is that within the walls of the palace park, a legendary porcelain manufactory has continued operating largely unchanged since its inception in the 18th century.

Upon arriving at Nymphenburg, one first lays eyes on the palace's massive frontal expanse (figure 1), noted to be wider than that of Versailles. Indeed, the 18th-century expansion of Schloss Nymphenburg under Prince-Elector Maximilian III Joseph was heavily inspired by Versailles. The southern park is enveloped on both sides by a grand circle of Baroque mansions, the so-called Kavaliershäuschen, or Cavalier Houses (figure 2), built in the second half of the 18th century for courtiers. Maximilian III established Nymphenburg's porcelain manufactory in 1747, and it has occupied one of these Cavalier Houses since 1761. With royal patronage and the skills of ceramicist

Joseph Jakob Ringler and sculptor Franz Anton Bustelli, the complex production of hard paste porcelain was perfected and refined.

Bustelli's Rococo figural work was particularly innovative and lively. His most mature designs—and those best loved by his elite patrons—included multi-figured schemes of elaborately dressed men and women trading demure glances, their curvilinear ceramic bases often bedecked with scrollwork gilding. His work leaned into the prevailing fascination with cultures farther east, and he produced a series of Chinese

Above: Figure 1. Nymphenburg Palace.
Right: Figure 2. The Nymphenburg Porcelain Manufactory is located behind this Cavalier House.



Counterclockwise from top: Figure 3. Franz Anton Bustelli, Nymphenburg Porcelain Manufactory, Isabella and Octavio, c. 1760, Germany. Hard-paste porcelain. Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, 77/50 and 77/51. • Figure 4. Dog figure before painting and finishing. • Figure 5. The Nymphenburg Porcelain Manufactory's Clara figure. • Figure 6. A Nymphenburg Porcelain Manufactory artist carefully paints a plate.

and Turkish figures as well as characters from the popular Italian improvisational theater Commedia dell'arte (figure 3).

Following Bustelli, many other artisans gained acclaim within the Nymphenburg Porcelain Manufactory, and its reputation among international aristocracies grew. In subsequent decades, the manufactory produced tableware, vases, accessories, and animal



figures (figure 4). The figure of Clara (figure 5), a Bengalese rhinoceros and 18th-century European sensation, was modeled by Peter Anton von Verschaffelt in 1770 and remains an icon of the manufactory today. Verschaffelt, like Bustelli, created molds of successful designs so that they could be more easily replicated. Contemporary artisans are



still producing wares based on these original molds. As part of the 2022 Study Trip Abroad to Bavaria, the Decorative Arts Trust was given special access to the working manufactory at Nymphenburg. Behind one of the original Cavalier Houses, which now holds a shop of magnificent products, adjacent buildings house the workshops of the contemporary ceramicists. Between the buildings runs the Nymphenburg estate's stream, driving a system of belts outside and inside the studios, powering mills, mixing clay, and spinning potter's wheels, as it has since the 18th century. Upon entering the first floor of the workshop, one sees wooden racks of identical matte-white spun dishware drying in

the turning shop. Dust from dried kaolin compound hugs the corners of the floor. Inside the molding studio, artisans sit at their workstations, hand-sculpting or casting every part that cannot be thrown on the potter's wheel. From tiny pieces for delicate, intricate works—flowers to be attached to garlands, hands and facial features of Commedia dell'arte figurines—to larger forms such as the still-popular Clara, all details are precisely hand-modeled to exact specifications. Pieces are given their final shape according to the original templates. After these meticulously sculpted works are fired, they are either left unglazed as finished pieces in bisque, immersed into a glaze bath and given a second firing, or delivered to the second floor for paint decoration before a third firing. The painting studio smells of turpentine, clove, and lavender oils, elements that are mixed with pigments to create the color palettes for finished works. The precision of the painted work is extraordinary, from delicate linework on a plate to the lifelike fur and plumage of their prized animal figures, all are executed by painters who have completed a lengthy apprenticeship, working entirely freehand, without the aid of stencils (figure 6).

Since the Nymphenburg Porcelain Manufactory's arrival at the palace in 1761, its porcelain production has evolved to become ever-more sophisticated, resulting in pieces that are internationally acclaimed for their beauty and delicacy. The Trust's



visit to the workshop allowed a rare opportunity to witness craftspeople working in historic techniques that have been carefully preserved—where the time, training, and labor of handmade artistry is prioritized over the efficiency of machines—and in a place where the very innovators of the craft itself worked, experimented, and perfected the art of hard paste porcelain. ■



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Catherine Carlisle is the Manager of Educational Programs at the Decorative Arts Trust.

SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN

Cultural Exchanges



by Monica Obniski and Bobby Tigerman

SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN HAS become so intertwined into US culture over the years that it is difficult to determine where Scandinavian design ends and American design begins.

An extensive exhibition, *Scandinavian Design and the United States, 1890–1980*, is currently on view at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), which Decorative Arts Trust members had the privilege of enjoying during a special tour in early December (figure 1).

Scandinavian Design and the United States is an international collaboration between LACMA, the Milwaukee Art Museum, Nationalmuseum Sweden, Stockholm, and Nasjonalmuseet Norway, Oslo. The groundbreaking exhibition is the first to examine the considerable

design exchanges between the United States and the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden during the 20th century. Serving as a corrective to the dominant narrative of central European émigrés (most associated with the Bauhaus) shaping modern American design culture, the exhibition presents a new international story.

The show features accounts of Scandinavian designers who immigrated to the United States, Americans who studied or worked in Nordic countries, the ambitious campaigns to market and export Scandinavian

design to American consumers, and the American and Nordic figures who championed sustainable and accessible design practice.

Many of the issues considered in the exhibition remain relevant today, including the contributions of immigrants to their adopted societies, the importance of international exchange, critical analysis of cultural myths, and concern about environmental sustainability and accessibility. The exhibition proposes the idealized version of Scandinavian design—one of organic forms, natural materials, handicraft, etc.—is a construction. One example that challenges the myth is a chair designed by Dane Finn Juhl (and sold as such in the advertisements), but manufactured by Baker Furniture in Grand Rapids, MI, demonstrating an American-made “Scandinavian” design that emulated the purportedly handcrafted and refined quality of Scandinavian products.



Above: Figure 1. Decorative Arts Trust members enjoy the exhibition at LACMA with Bobby Tigerman. Shown at center front is Charles and Ray Eames's DAX chair, Herman Miller Furniture Company, 1948–50. Fiberglass, steel, rubber. LACMA, purchased with funds provided by Alice and Nahum Lainer, M.2010.13..

Right: Figure 2. Finn Juhl, Baker Furniture, Inc., Armchair, model 400-1/2, designed 1951. Leather, walnut. Milwaukee Art Museum, bequest of Dr. Lucille Cohn (M2013.69), photo © Milwaukee Art Museum, by John R. Glembin.

AND THE UNITED STATES: from 1890–1980



Scandinavian Design and the United States showcases more than 175 captivating examples of furniture, industrial design, textiles, ceramics, glass, metalwork, jewelry, and lighting drawn from the co-organizing museums' collections as well as from North American and Nordic museums and private holdings.

The exhibition is divided into six thematic sections: Migration and Heritage, Teachers and Students, Travel Abroad, Selling the Scandinavian Dream, Design for Diplomacy, and Design for Social Change.

Migration and Heritage explores how

Scandinavian immigrants and their descendants made myriad contributions to the artistic and cultural life of their adopted communities. For example, Swedish-born artist Lillian Holm immigrated around 1930 to Detroit, where she worked as a weaver and influential teacher at several Michigan art schools. Her *First Sight of New York hanging* (figure 3) depicts her awe upon seeing the towering skyscrapers and dense crowds of the metropolis.

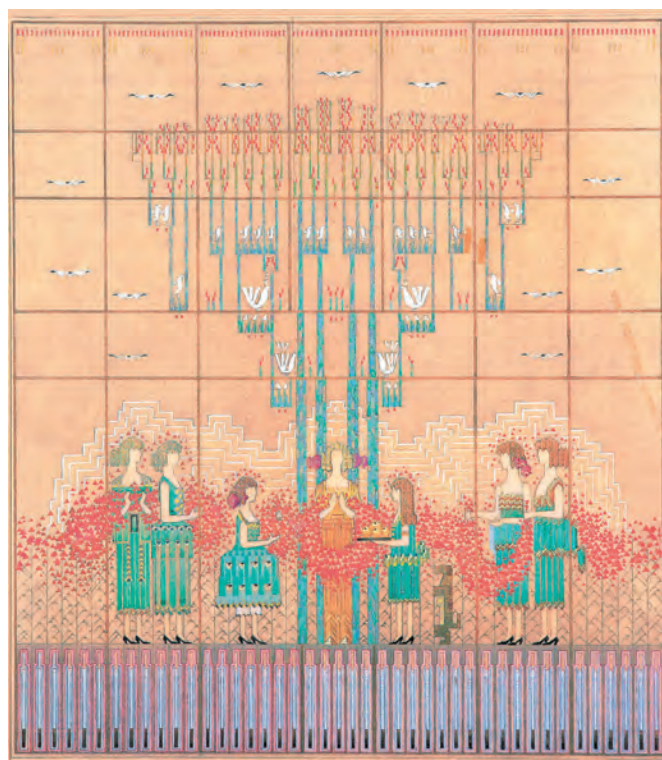
In *Teachers and Students*, we see how Scandinavian designers and craftspeople taught in American schools and ultimately shaped

the course of American design. One center of influence was the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, MI, for which Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen was hired to design both the physical campus and pedagogical structure. He envisioned its plan and major buildings. Working with his wife Loja, Eliel Saarinen's

The *Festival of the May Queen Tapestry* (figure 4) celebrates a revered rite of spring at Cranbrook. The elements of queen, court, pet, fauna and flora provide a charming and apt decoration for Eliel's splendid dining hall in the original girls' school at Cranbrook. (Read more about Loja Saarinen and Cranbrook in Nina Bloomfield's article on pages 24–27.)

Saarinen also hired leading Nordic artists as faculty, such as ceramist Maija Grotell, sculptor Carl Milles, and weaver Marianne Strengell. These leaders in turn attracted promising American students, including Charles and Ray Eames, Florence Knoll, Ed Rossbach, and Toshiko Takaezu.

The *Travel Abroad* section illustrates how cultural exchange between the Nordic countries and the United States was sustained through fellowships, formal academic programs, and



Above: Figure 3. Lillian Holm, *First Sight of New York hanging*, 1930s. Linen, cotton, wool, viscose rayon. Collection of the Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, MI; gift of Mrs. Lillian Holm in memory of Ralph T. Sayles (FIA 1965.14), © Lillian Holm, photo © Flint Institute of Arts, by Heather Jackson.

Right: Figure 4. Eliel Saarinen and Loja Saarinen, *Study for Festival of the May Queen hanging*, Kingswood School, 1932. Watercolor, gouache, and pencil on tracing paper. © Eliel Saarinen® and © Loja Saarinen, photo © Cranbrook Art Museum (1981.12).

apprenticeships. Howard Smith was an African American artist who moved to Finland to escape systemic racism and a lack of professional opportunities in his home country. Smith's c. 1978 printed textile (figure 5) for the Finnish firm Vallila became popular as a home decoration and was exported back to the United States.

Selling the Scandinavian Dream examines how the image of Scandinavia was sold to American consumers by evoking the parallel mythic "American dream." Both creations prompted the notion that consumer capitalism can lead to class mobility and a better quality of life. The marketing of Scandinavian design exploited a variety of stereotypes and myths about the Nordic region and Nordic people.

This theme is exemplified by the iconic colorful tablewares produced by the company Dansk (figure 6). For many Americans, Dansk's enameled steel and carved teak products are quintessential examples of Scandinavian design. However, Dansk is an American company, founded in 1954 by a New York entrepreneur who worked with Danish designer Jens H. Quistgaard. Through strategic marketing and naming (Dansk translates to "Danish"), Dansk effectively capitalized on Americans' admiration for Scandinavian design.

Design for Diplomacy considers how nations have long used design and architecture to advance their political goals through the "soft power"



of cultural propaganda, national pavilions at world's fairs, traveling museum exhibitions, and the construction of diplomatic architecture, such as embassies. Sometimes, their goals were overtly political: the Scandinavian countries sought to align themselves with the democratic, capitalist side of the Cold War divide by appealing to American

tastes and associating their products with values of freedom, democracy, and openness. The greatest manifestation of international diplomacy in the post-World War II era was the United Nations headquarters (1946–52), built in New York City as a place for nations to gather peacefully. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were invited to design the three largest meeting halls. Swedish artist Marianne Richter's vibrant tapestry curtain (figure 7) provided the focal point for Sweden's contribution, the Economic and Social Affairs Council Chamber. It enlivened the otherwise neutral-toned, modernist space, adding warmth to support the Council's diplomatic and humanitarian mission.

In the final section, Design for Social Change, we see how the turbulent social and political conditions of the late 1960s prompted some designers to think critically about their work, envisioning a new role for design within society, and considering how design could address systemic problems, such as the planet's dwindling resources, overconsumption and excessive waste, safety, and physical barriers to access. Swedish designers Maria Benktzon and Sven-Eric Juhlin created household products based on ergonomic research. Jim and Penny Hull founded H.U.D.D.L.E in California in the 1970s, creating lightweight and inexpensive furniture. They built Big Toobs beds (figure 8) by inserting tubular fiberboard into wooden panels, establishing a practical and fun sleeping environment.



Above: Figure 5. Howard Smith for Vallila, Textile, designed c. 1978. Linen. LACMA, gift of Kenneth Erwin, © Erik J. Smith & Erna Aaltonen, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA.

Right: Figure 6. Jens H. Quistgaard, Dansk Designs, Kobenstyle casseroles and pitcher, designed 1955. Casseroles: enameled steel. Pitcher: enameled steel, plastic. Private collections, photo © Milwaukee Art Museum, by John R. Glembin.



Figure 7. Marianne Richter, Sketch of tapestry for United Nations Economic and Social Council Chamber, c. 1951. Watercolor on paper. ArkDes, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design collections (ARKM.1972-10-1713), © 2019 Marianne Richter/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, photo © ArkDes, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design.

American designer Niels Diffrient worked with a team in the design firm Henry Dreyfuss Associates to publish *Humanscale* (1974), an ergonomic design guide that accounted for a range of clients, including wheelchair users, rather than focusing on average proportions and able-bodied persons. Contemporary designers' concern for solving endemic problems and addressing urgent global needs demonstrates the legacy of this design critique.

These are just a fraction of the remarkable objects that illustrate how Scandinavian design has had a lasting impact on American life, and how that cultural exchange crossed the Atlantic in both directions. The accompanying catalogue showcases the full range of stunning decorative arts gathered for this one-of-a-kind event. The exhibition will be at LACMA through February 5, 2023, and then will move to Milwaukee Art Museum from March 24 through July 23, 2023. ■

Monica Obniski is the Curator of Decorative Arts and Design at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. She worked on this exhibition in her role as Demmer Curator of 20th- and 21st-Century Design at the Milwaukee Art Museum.

Bobby Tigerman is the Marilyn B. and Calvin B. Gross Curator, Decorative Arts and Design, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

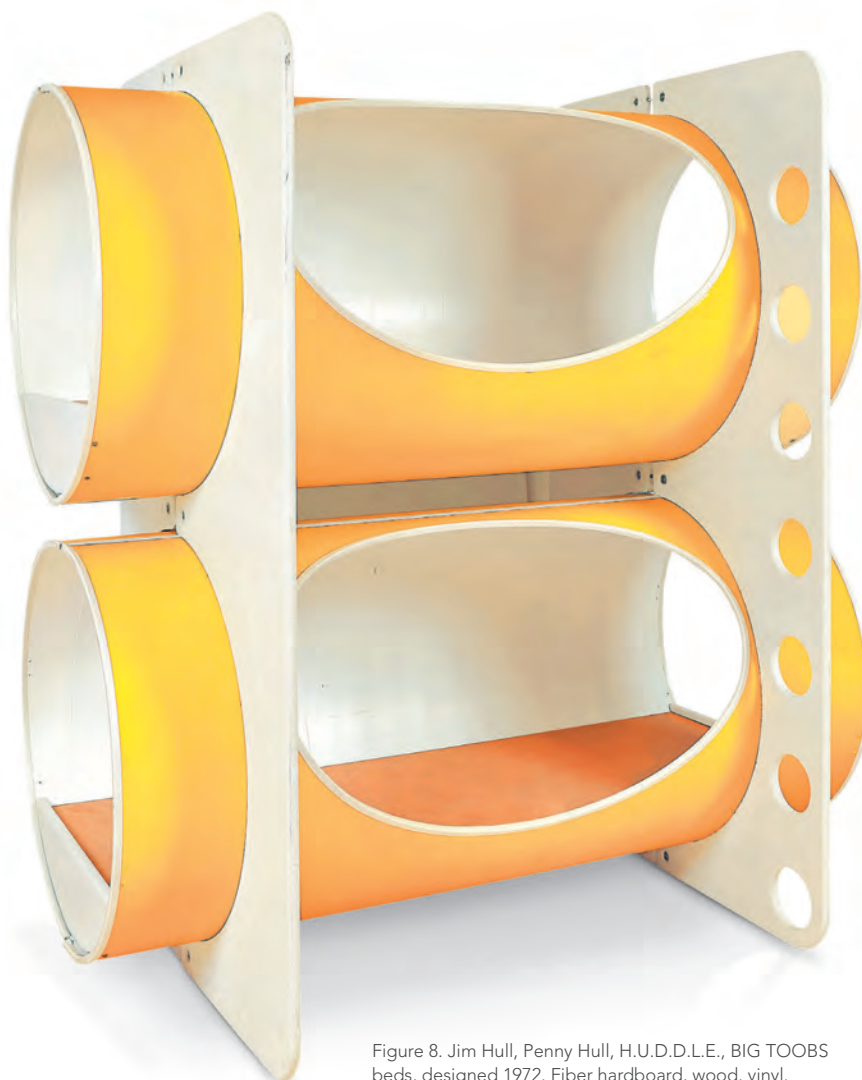


Figure 8. Jim Hull, Penny Hull, H.U.D.D.L.E., BIG TOOBS beds, designed 1972. Fiber hardboard, wood, vinyl. Collection of Jordana Joseph and Glen Saltzberg, photo courtesy Toomey & Co. Auctioneers, by Radek Dusilo.

Hear Me Now: The Met's Landmark Exhibition of Ceramics from the Edgefield District

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART'S landmark exhibition *Hear Me Now: The Black Potters of Old Edgefield, South Carolina* focuses on the work of African American potters in the 19th-century American South, in dialogue with contemporary artistic responses. Considered through the lens of current scholarship in the fields of history, literature, anthropology, material culture, diaspora, and African American studies, these vessels testify to the lived experiences, artistic agency, and material knowledge of the enslaved peoples of this area.

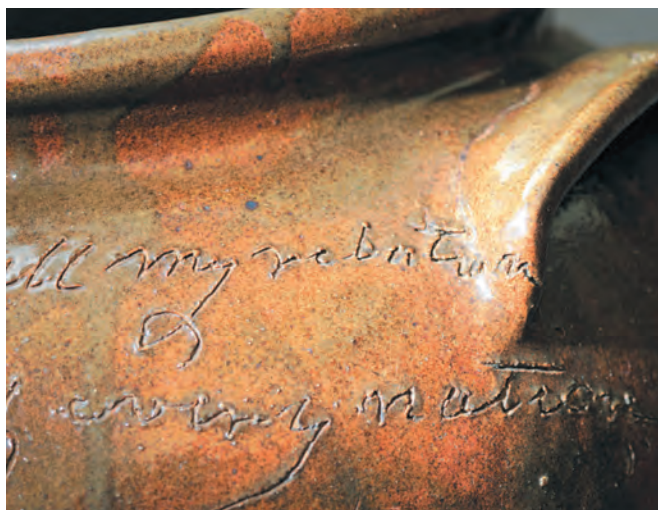
The exhibition is co-curated by Adrienne Spinozzi, Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts at The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ethan Lasser, John Moors Cabot Chair of the Art of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts; and Jason Young, Associate Professor of History at the University of Michigan. A group of artists and scholars were engaged in the planning of the exhibition, including Kate Hughes, who worked with Adrienne during a two-year fellowship funded by the Decorative Arts Trust. When the exhibition closes at The Met on February 5, 2023, it travels to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (March 6–July 9, 2023), the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor (August 26, 2023–January 7, 2024), and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta (February 16–May 12, 2024). This article is excerpted from the accompanying catalogue of the same name, as well as exhibition content and press materials. The publication features essays on the production, use, collection, dispersal, and reception of stoneware from Edgefield, an interview with a contemporary artist, as well as new perspectives on agency, creativity, and resistance within the institution of slavery.

In the decades before the Civil War, a successful alkaline-glazed stoneware industry developed in Old Edgefield District, a clay-rich area in the westernmost part of South Carolina. From

the beginning, enslaved African Americans were involved with all aspects of this labor-intensive industry. The stoneware they made—durable, impervious, utilitarian vessels of varying sizes and forms essential for food preparation and storage—supported the region's expanding population and was inextricably linked to the demands of a plantation economy.

The beginnings of the alkaline-glazed stoneware industry in this country can be traced to the early 1800s, when Abner Landrum found deposits of kaolin (a mineral substance necessary for ceramic production) in western South Carolina. By the 1810s, the village of Pottersville had developed around Landrum's pottery and kiln, making it one of the earliest of at least a dozen manufacturing sites in the area. The success of these potteries depended on the labor and expertise of enslaved African Americans who developed the specialized skills necessary for mining and processing clay; constructing sophisticated kilns; felling, hauling, and seasoning lumber for fuel; and managing multiday firings of kilns that spanned more than 100 feet in length. In an effort to reduce reliance on Northern and foreign imports, the burgeoning stoneware industry met the needs of the rapidly expanding plantation economy, supplying the region with functional wares.

Hear Me Now opens with a display of 12 extraordinary vessels by Edgefield's best-known potter, Dave (figures 1, 2, and 3), who by the late 1860s appears in official documentation as David Drake. Dave likely made thousands of vessels, and beginning in the 1830s he signed, dated, and inscribed dozens of pots with short verses. Witty yet tragic, straightforward but endlessly elusive, his poems merit close attention. Written for his contemporaries, but also for the future, the verses reflect the joys, traumas, and lived experience of enslavement, echoing the prose



Clockwise from top left: Figures 1 and 2. Dave (later recorded as David Drake), Stony Bluff Manufactory, Storage jar, 1857, Old Edgefield District, SC. Alkaline-glazed stoneware. Inscription: "I wonder where is all my relation / Friendship to all – and every nation / Lm Aug 16, 1857 Dave". Collection of Greenville County Museum of Art. All images © Metropolitan Museum of Art. All photos by Eileen Travell unless otherwise noted. • Figure 3. Dave, Stony Bluff Manufactory, Jug, 1853, Old Edgefield District, SC. Alkaline-glazed stoneware. Inscription: "Lm / June 10 1853". Collection of Glenn Ligon. • Figure 4. Possibly Dave, Stony Bluff Manufactory, Fragment of a vessel, 1848–67. Alkaline-glazed stoneware. Collection of C. Philip and Corbett Toussaint.

of abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs.

At their core, Dave's inscriptions were acts of defiance. He worked at a time when South Carolina law explicitly prohibited enslaved people from learning to read or write. Despite grave consequences—50 lashes were prescribed, but punishments were often more violent—Dave continued to write for more than three decades. All the while, he was honing his craft, using his delicate touch and prodigious strength to produce larger and larger pots, even after losing a leg under mysterious circumstances. Dave's late jars are so big and heavy they are almost immobile, closer to monuments and gravestones than to the household

vessels made at many of Edgefield's potteries.

Enslaved potters were regularly "hired out" and sent from one pottery to another, leading to the development of an African American community of mobile potters. Their authorship is evident in a range of maker marks and symbols, handprints (figure 4), distinctive decoration, and, in rarer instances, inscribed dates and names. The contributions of other laborers may be less visible, but they were equally critical to the success of the potteries.

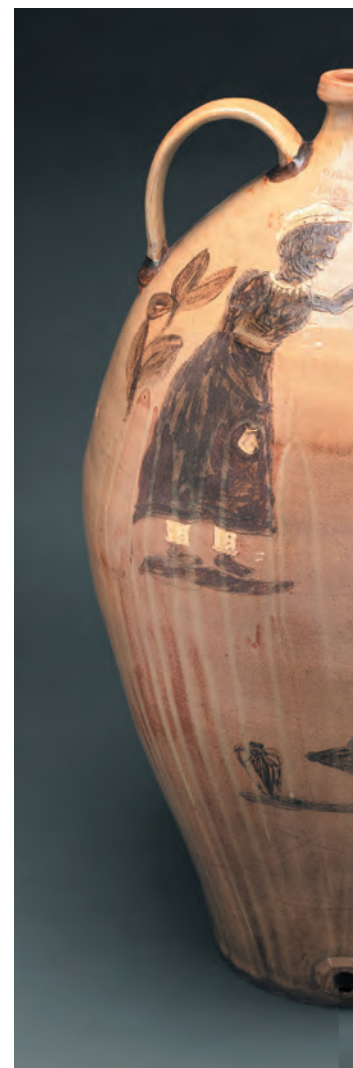
Abner Landrum's Bottle (figure 5) bears a date and signature in cursive script, which is the only known work carrying

Landrum's name. It is the earliest example of an inscribed Edgefield vessel, foreshadowing those produced by Dave starting in the following decade. Landrum also published the short-lived *Edgefield Hive* (1829–30), a local serial newspaper, which featured a regular "Poetry" column. During this period, Dave was enslaved by Landrum, and only a few years later writing first appears on the wares made by Dave. Whether coincidence or causality, Dave was enslaved in a literary environment.

Like Landrum, many of the potteries operating during this time relied on enslaved labor to complete the wide range of tasks required to sustain the burgeoning stoneware industry. Although many objects bear his stamp and signature slip-trailed decoration, the white potter Thomas M. Chandler Jr. had at least four enslaved potters working with him at various times at different potteries, complicating the narrative that Chandler is responsible for the wares bearing his impressed mark. A large watercooler—one of only a handful known to compare in size to the wares of Dave—features finely executed incised and painted decoration in slip (figure 6). This is most likely the work of Chandler, whose early stonewares also included painted figurative embellishment. This impressive object remains a mystery. Its anomalous composition of a slave wedding rendered in painstaking detail begs many questions about its purpose and reception when it was created in 1840.

Enslaved men and women also worked in numerous artisanal fields adjacent to the potteries. As carpenters, masons, and woodcutters, they hauled, hewed, and carried material to support Edgefield's pottery industry; others built and fired kilns and distributed the wares across the region. Their collective artistry and technical knowledge are reflected in the network of African American potters who continued working in stoneware after emancipation.

Among the exhibition highlights is a selection of 18 regional face vessels—ceramic vessels embellished with hand-modeled facial features in high relief (figures 7 and 8). Also referred to as face jugs, their emergence coincides roughly with the 1858 arrival of a slave ship illegally transporting more than 400 captive Africans, some 50 years after the transatlantic slave trade had been outlawed in the United States. More than 100 of these individuals were sent to Edgefield, where many were put to work in the potteries. Growing evidence suggests that this late arrival of captive Africans served as a



catalyst in the re-emergence of African-inspired art, religion, and culture in the region. Face vessels bear a close resemblance to *minkisi*, or ritual objects, that were important in West-Central African religious practices. Kaolin served as a sacred substance to facilitate communication between the living and the dead



during rituals. Kaolin inserts are found in Edgefield face vessels, suggesting similar spiritual meanings.

The exhibition also steps back centuries prior to European and American incursions on what is now the southeastern United States when Indigenous peoples had developed tools and

Top row from left: Figure 5. Dr. Abner Landrum, Pottersville Stoneware Manufactory, Bottle, 1820, Old Edgefield District, SC. Alkaline-glazed stoneware. Inscription: "July 20, 1820 A. Landrum". William C. and Susan S. Mariner Collection at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts at Old Salem, Winston-Salem, NC, 5813.1. • Figure 6. Unrecorded potter, probably Thomas M. Chandler, Jr., Phoenix Stone Ware Factory, Watercooler, c. 1840, Old Edgefield District, SC. Alkaline-glazed stoneware with iron and kaolin slip. Stamp: "PHOENIX / FACTORY / ED:SC". Collection of the High Museum of Art, 1996.132. Purchase in honor of Audrey Shilt, President of the Members Guild, 1996–1997, with funds from the Decorative Arts Acquisition Endowment and Decorative Arts Acquisition Trust. Photo by Michael McKelvey / Courtesy of the High Museum of Art. • Figure 7. Unrecorded potter, attributed to Miles Mill Pottery, Face jug, 1867–85, Old Edgefield District, SC. Alkaline-glazed stoneware with kaolin. Hudgins Family Collection, New York.

Bottom row from left: Figure 8. Unrecorded potter, Face jug, 1850–70, Old Edgefield District, SC. Alkaline-glazed stoneware with kaolin. The Chipstone Foundation, 2012.3. Photo by Gavin Ashworth. • Figure 9. Unrecorded Woodland artist, Bowl, c. 1500. Earthenware. South Carolina State Museum, Columbia, Bequest of Roy Lyons. • Figure 10. Simone Leigh, *Large Jug*, 2021–22. Glazed stoneware. © Simone Leigh, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery.

techniques to take advantage of the area's rich clay deposits. On view in the main gallery is an example of an earthenware bowl dating to around 1500 by an unidentified Woodland artist (figure 9) alongside a modern vessel by Earl Robbins (1923–2010), a Catawba Indian Nation potter.

Speaking to Edgefield's continued resonance, and offering connections to an otherwise fragmented past, are seven contemporary works by five Black artists working today, including Simone Leigh (figure 10), Adebunmi Gbadebo, Woody De Othello, Theaster Gates, and Robert Pruitt. The contemporary works in the show engage with issues of identity in various ways, and some are directly responding to the historical stoneware. For others, their practice resonates with Edgefield stoneware. In dialogue with the historic wares, these works serve as urgent reminder that artistry and creative expression can persist even under brutal conditions—a resounding message in our current moment of racial reckoning.

Through the stories of these objects, *Hear Me Now* sheds light on the many contributions and lived experiences of the hundreds of men, women, and children who labored within slavery's system of oppression by presenting a fuller picture of the region's stoneware produc-

tion. As the first exhibition from The Met's American Wing to highlight the work of enslaved makers, this project marks a pivotal moment in the Museum's efforts to tell a more inclusive and expansive story of artistic expression, both past and present. ■



A LIFE FULL OF ART: Collections and Connections at Cranbrook's

by Nina Blomfield

THERE ARE FEW PLACES that embody the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or the total work of art, like Cranbrook. Founded in the early 20th century, Cranbrook Educational Community occupies a national historic landmark campus where art, architecture, and education are interwoven with daily life. At the nearby Frank Lloyd Wright Smith House, a recent addition to Cranbrook's cultural properties, the

principles of the Arts and Crafts were taken to heart by two teachers who made the total design of their home their life's work. With a small team and an ambitious calendar of events and public programs, the Cranbrook Center for Collections and Research (CCCR) cares for Cranbrook and shares the community's history and legacy, including its cultural properties and historic campus. I joined CCCR as the Decorative Arts Trust Marie Zimmermann Resident Collections Fellow in the summer of 2021. In my first year as the Collections Fellow, I have participated in almost all aspects of the Center's operations and been totally immersed in this work of art. I am grateful for the generous support of the Decorative Arts Trust and the Marie and John Zimmermann Fund in enabling me to live and learn in these beautifully crafted surroundings.

My primary responsibility as the Collections Fellow during my two-year tenure is the documentation of the decorative arts collection of the Melvyn Maxwell and Sara Stein Smith House

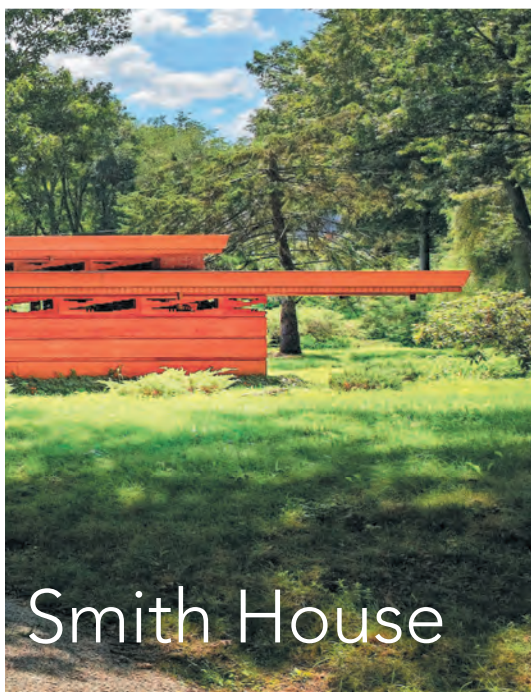
(figure 1), located about a mile from the Cranbrook campus in Bloomfield Hills, MI. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1946 and completed in 1950, the Smith House is an incredibly well-preserved example of Wright's Usonian architecture, with a modest L-shaped floor plan executed in a simplified palette of glass, brick, cypress, and pigmented concrete. The balanced proportions of the cantilevered roofline, the rhythmic geometry of the clerestory window designs, and the shifting color relationships of the tidewater red cypress exterior and the surrounding oak trees all contribute to the harmonious relationship between house and landscape.

Smith House is more than just a beautifully designed dwelling. This historic home tells the compelling story of Melvyn and Sara Smith's efforts to build a life full of art. Detroit public school teachers from large immigrant families, the Smiths (figure 2) made major personal sacrifices to realize their dream of living in a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed house, overcoming antisemitic discrimination from realtors and neighbors in order to build their residence in redlined Bloomfield Hills. In the decades that followed, the couple filled their home with objects that



Top: Figure 1. Melvyn Maxwell and Sara Stein Smith House exterior. Photograph by James Haefner.

Left: Figure 2. Melvyn and Sara Smith, c. 1970. Smith Papers. Cranbrook Archives.



Smith House

reflected a deep love of art and music. They purchased works from young artists befriended at Cranbrook Academy of Art and the College of Creative Studies in Detroit and acquired ceramics, glass, wood, and fiber art from local and national artists that testify to the renewed vitality of craft communities in the mid-20th century.

Although the decorative arts of the Smith House were enjoyed by the Smiths during their lifetimes and shared with their many guests over the years, the holdings had yet to be fully documented by the CCCR. My first tasks were to assess prior work on the collection and to determine a strategy for research that would deepen our understanding of when, how, and why the Smiths brought objects into their home. Subsequent work focused on surveying the Smith Papers in the Cranbrook Archives to determine the provenance of objects and track relationships with artists. Archival research and correspondence with living artists represented at Smith House has already broadened our view of the couple's collecting practices and the development of their patronage

of the local artistic community. This new scholarship will be made publicly accessible through the development of an online collections portal and in contributions to a forthcoming publication on Smith House, projects which I have helped develop.

Remarkably, the contents of Smith House were preserved intact after the passing of Melvyn in 1984 and Sara in 2005, and the Smiths remain the only family to occupy the house before the Towbes Foundation donated it to Cranbrook in 2017. Maintaining the structure and collection is a key aspect of my fellowship, and the associated tasks have included everything from liaising with the Collections Interpreters on public tours and conducting special

tours myself, to reinstalling parts of the interior to a historically accurate state, to conservation and maintenance of the exterior architectural elements and sculpture. The Smith House collection was never formally accessioned, and I am preparing accession recommendations and presenting these for approval at Board of Trustees committee meetings as my research progresses.

Smith House has been at the center of my curatorial and collections management work, but I have enjoyed many opportunities to learn about the essential operations of an institution like Cranbrook, including systems of governance and aspects of fundraising and development. One of the most rewarding projects has been the production of *Room for a*



Figures 3 and 4. Smith House interiors. Photographs by Daniel Mountain.



Lady: Loja Saarinen at Cranbrook (2022), a documentary film on the life and work of Finnish-American designer Loja Saarinen that premiered at the Center's annual fundraiser (figure 5). The film offers a new perspective on Saarinen as both an entrepreneur who established Cranbrook Academy of Art's first Weaving Department, and a multi-talented artist whose textiles, architectural models, photographs, and landscape designs played an integral role in the conception and construction of Cranbrook as a total work of art. I assisted the Center's Curator, Kevin Adkisson, with the production and editing (figure 6) and made my on-camera debut to discuss how historic gender roles and issues of attribution and documentation have obscured our understanding of Loja Saarinen's work at Cranbrook (figure 7).

Cranbrook is one of the few Arts and Crafts enterprises of the early 20th century that continues its mission of entwining art and education, which it accomplishes through a graduate-degree awarding Academy of Art and a Pre-K through 12 school community. Working with current students at the middle school, high school, and graduate level has enlivened my fellowship experience. In February and March of 2022, I co-curated *Brought to the Table: New Work from Cranbrook Academy of Art Students and Artists-in-Residence* with Kevin Adkisson and Artist-in-Residence and Head of Metalsmithing Iris Eichenberg (figures 8 and 9).



Top: Figure 5. Screening of *Room for a Lady: Loja Saarinen at Cranbrook* in the historic Kingswood auditorium, 2022. Photograph by P.D. Rearick.

Middle: Figure 6. Nina Blomfield and Center Curator Kevin Adkisson examine Studio Loja Saarinen textiles on set for *Room for a Lady: Loja Saarinen at Cranbrook*. Photograph by Elkhorn Entertainment, Ltd.

Bottom: Figure 7. Nina Blomfield on set in the Saarinen House dining room for *Room for a Lady: Loja Saarinen at Cranbrook*. Photograph by Kevin Adkisson.

Academy students were invited to engage with the history of decorative arts at Cranbrook by producing site-specific works for tables in Smith House, Saarinen House (the 1930 house of Loja Saarinen and first Academy President Eliel Saarinen), and Cranbrook House (the 1908–1919 manor home of Cranbrook founders George and Ellen Booth). This was my first curatorial experience with contemporary art and its ability to animate, interrogate, and destabilize our expectations of historic interior spaces. I am looking forward to new cross-campus collaborations in the year to come.

The Decorative Arts Trust Marie Zimmermann Resident Collections Fellowship has been an incredibly valuable opportunity to grow as a scholar and museum professional. I came to Cranbrook as a PhD Candidate in the History of Art at Bryn Mawr College, where my studies have focused on domestic interior decoration in the late 19th century, and Smith House has allowed me to push my academic interest in artisanry and design much further into the 20th century. I am grateful for this chance to get to know Melvyn and Sara Smith, to make new discoveries about their home and their collection, and at the same time, to gain insights into the significant but necessary behind-the-scenes workings that make such scholarship possible. I am excited to share what I have learned with Decorative Arts Trust members during a special program in July 2023. ■

Nina Blomfield is the Decorative Arts Trust Marie Zimmermann Resident Collections Fellow at the Cranbrook Center for Collections and Research.



Top: Figure 8. A large terra-cotta candleholder by Chris Salas (CAA Ceramics 2023), felt plant by Yuyu Chen (CAA 3D Design 2023), tea set by Chungchi Choo, 1964, CAM 2021.14 (CAA Metalsmithing 1965) rest atop a felted yak wool tablecloth by Kelly Kroener (CAA Sculpture 2022). Photo by Eric Perry.

Bottom: Figure 9. An arrangement of candlesticks and candle holders from students at Cranbrook Academy of Art intermingled with lighting implements from Cranbrook Institute of Science, Cranbrook Art Museum, and Cranbrook Cultural Properties Collection. Photo by Eric Perry.