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Center for Craft evolves strategic direction to explore how and why craft matters

A new plan further activates craft's potential by focusing on communities

ASHEVILLE, NC (November 30, 2022) – For over 25 years, the Center for Craft has been at the vanguard of the craft movement, advancing the understanding, prominence, and historical significance of craft, and identifying and cultivating the next great researchers and artists in the field. Now, the Center is building on this remarkable foundation through a realigned strategic plan, *Craft Matters*. Focused on activating resources, catalyzing craft communities, and amplifying craft's impact, *Craft Matters* will not only shape the Center's direction for the next five years, but will have far-ranging influence.

Craft Matters centers communities of practice in a necessary challenge to the studio craft movement, which emerged in the mid-20th Century. This shift in thinking and disposition recognizes that craft goes far beyond the 'object' itself and, instead, has been fundamental to the human experience and how we build community. A focus on the object has perpetuated the oversimplification of craft as a unified field and subjected craft to institutional and academic parameters that privileged particular voices and experiences in the quest for a unified narrative. Over the next five years, the Center will realign resources and focus to support the many paths into and within craft, serving as a platform to resource, catalyze, and amplify how and why craft matters.

"The Center for Craft is emerging as a national leader in terms of both asking the important and expansive question, 'What is craft and who are the practitioners?', but also outlines support for the answers," shares Penland School of Craft Executive Director Mia Hall.

Since 2002, the Center has hosted a biennial "Craft Think Tank" to bring together diverse voices around specific areas of inquiry for the benefit of craft. The 2021 Craft Think Tank was instrumental in shaping the Center's new direction. Bringing together artists and thought leaders across disciplines, the Craft Think Tank asked participants to envision the complex present and possible futures of craft. Central to the discussion was the notion of craft communities, knitted together by shared language, structures, and value systems, and an exploration of what "Craft Can..." a lens participants used to explore craft's expansive potential.

"As a participant in the *Craft Think Tank: Craft Can...* I was inspired as we did the collaborative thinking and revisioning that is needed to broaden our lens," says Alison Croney Moses, Associate Director of the Eliot School of Fine & Applied Arts. "When we broaden that lens to include those who have historically been excluded, erased, and pushed to the margins, we are making space for

true creativity, problem solving and telling of our stories. As a result, 'craft' is more authentic to who we are as a society."

The Center for Craft's focus remains on the educational value of craft, but future programs will approach the idea of scholarship more comprehensively than has been true historically, in recognition of the many paths people may take, including through craft schools, community colleges, and trade schools that reach wider populations. This broadened lens more accurately reflects the reality of craft and allows the Center more opportunities to empower and resource emergent, groundbreaking, and unconventional talent, including in historically underrepresented communities.

"As craft practitioners, many of us hold roles as culture bearers in our communities," says artist, craftsperson, and activist Tanya Aguiñiga. "Craft is connection and lineage for many of us that have lost familial ties to homelands. It is rooting and belonging. It is important that we understand and nurture craft's ability to make space for all regardless of educational background."

"As a person who was introduced to craft at community college, I deeply appreciate the Center for Craft understanding how important it is to invest in educational systems used widely by marginalized communities," she continues. "To support community colleges, vocational schools, and alternative modes of learning outside of traditional universities is a major step in addressing systemic discrimination that has kept generations of us from participating in the making of craft. Craft helps us shape narratives through the objects and images that we make. I am excited to see how a more inclusive approach to who gets to benefit from craft reshapes our understanding of our own field and the possibilities it holds for society."

Shifts will also take place at the Center for Craft's physical location in Asheville, NC, where the organization's storefront galleries will feature longer-running shows from curatorial fellows and other Center-curated exhibitions, as well as intuitive and experiential ways to engage with craft and its rich history in the region.

"More than any other creative endeavor, craft is the perfect union of making meaningful objects combined with the willingness to share acquired process skills with others," shares Robyn Horn, artist and Chair of the Windgate Foundation's Board of Directors. "As a donor and an artist, I recognize what the Center for Craft has done to continually encourage and enable both making and sharing within the craft community."

As we continue to shift the understanding of craft and highlight its many expressions, we invite the public to learn with us and experience our changes in action. Read the *Craft Matters* strategic plan [here](#), and make a note to register for our online conversation about the plan's direction held in February 2023.

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ABOUT CENTER FOR CRAFT

The Center for Craft is a 501(c)3 national nonprofit that increases access to craft by empowering and resourcing artists, organizations, and communities through grants, fellowships and programs that bring people together. Founded in 1996, the Center is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential organizations working on behalf of craft in the United States. For more information, visit www.centerforcraft.org.