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Center for Craft celebrates the opening of Sleight of Hand

Six contemporary artists of color use humor to interrogate social issues in the latest Curatorial Fellows exhibit

ASHEVILLE, NC (October 27, 2020) – *Sleight of Hand*, curated by Center for Craft 2020 Curatorial Fellow Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy, centralizes humor in the creative exploration of some of our most pressing contemporary social issues. On view beginning October 23 in the Bresler Family Gallery, the show highlights six artists of color currently working in mixed media, primarily clay, to approach issues like culture, race, tradition, and resilience through irreverent, absurd, ironic, cute, anthropomorphized, and eccentric objects.

In her statement about the show, Vizcarrondo-Laboy, includes two definitions for the phrase “sleight of hand”: “a cleverly executed trick or deception,” and “a conjuring trick requiring manual dexterity.” The show’s six artists draw viewers into their works through their use of whimsical forms, only to reveal deeply serious issues tied to current events and conversations. Vizcarrondo-Laboy explains, “For these artists, humor is not merely an aesthetic strategy; it is also a tool of resistance, resilience, and healing.”

“We are so pleased to have supported Vizcarrondo-Laboy through the Center’s 2020 Curatorial Fellowship program,” says Center for Craft Assistant Director and Curator Marilyn Zapf. “Her visionary, thoughtful, and research-driven approach to *Sleight of Hand* presents and contextualizes current artistic strategies and timely conversations in craft that propels the field forward.”

The exhibition updates the irreverent approaches of anti-establishment Bay Area Funk artists like Robert Arneson and David Gilhooly with a new group of young, emerging artists shifting the field and future of ceramics to re-centralize makers of color within an ever-diversifying landscape of visual arts.

Artists in the exhibition include Chicago-based Salvador Jiménez-Flores, whose piece, *La resistencia de los nopales híbridos* (*The Resistance of the Hybrid Cacti*), explicitly references Arneson’s iconoclastic self-portraiture, while also commenting on Jiménez-Flores’ own Mexican heritage and issues facing the Latinx community. Los Angeles-based artist Diana Yesenio Alvarado slyly remixes symbols familiar from popular culture, like clowns and Disney characters, to explore the sometimes contradictory depths of human experiences, particularly in her

hometown of East L.A. Iraqi-American artist Maryam Yousif's *Puabi Palms Pot* playfully imagines a figure of ancient history, Queen Puabi of Sumer, as a famous modern-day pop star whose visage graces ceramic vessels festooned with iconography of the Middle Eastern landscape.

Besides the ceramic works, the exhibition also features a video installation from Colombian-American artist Natalia Arbalaez, as well as a two-dimensional painted work from Mexican-American artist Yvette Mayorga, which also incorporate the history and uses of ceramics, both traditionally and experimentally.

This is the second exhibition from this year's 2020 Curatorial Fellowship recipients. Each year, the Curatorial Fellowship recognizes up-and-coming curators working at the cutting edge of craft. Three recipients organize shows at the Center for Craft as part of the Center's larger conversation around craft and its evolution. Learn more at centerforcraft.org.

A virtual tour of the exhibition is scheduled for Thursday, December 3 from 6-7 p.m. The event is free, but donations of \$5-10 are suggested and will support future programming. The Center is offering free, unguided visits and affordable tours of its exhibitions to the public. Guests can pre-register for a 30-minute visit to explore the current exhibitions, learn more about the Center's national impact in their Craft Research Fund Study Collection, and enjoy interactive activities.

Center for Craft is monitoring the effects of COVID-19 on the community and following the instruction of federal, state, and local health departments. Our top priority is always the health and safety of our staff, coworkers, and visitors. At this time, the Center will only allow a **maximum of five guests** in its public space at a time and will **require the use of masks or face coverings by all visitors**.

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ABOUT CENTER FOR CRAFT Founded in 1996, the Center for Craft (formerly The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design) is the leading organization in the United States identifying and convening craft makers, curators, and researchers, and matching them with resources, tools, and networks to advance their careers. Over the years, the Center has become a vital community resource, serving thousands of visitors annually. As a national 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the field of craft, the Center administers more than \$300,000 in grants to those working in the craft field.
www.centerforcraft.org

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