



MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM

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Innovative *The New Materiality* Opens at the Milwaukee Art Museum

Exhibition incorporates digital material and traditional craft

Milwaukee, Wis. – January 10, 2011 – *The New Materiality: Digital Dialogues at the Boundaries of Contemporary Craft* presents the work of sixteen emerging and established American craft artists who blend traditional craft materials such as fabric, glass, wood, metal and clay with digital technologies. The resulting pieces push artistic boundaries. The exhibition will be featured in the Milwaukee Art Museum's Decorative Arts Gallery, March 10–June 26, 2011.

The New Materiality is presented by the Chipstone Foundation and examines the growing use of new technologies in contemporary craft practice as a means to enrich craft expression, rather than displace it. For example, artists Mike Simonian and Maaiké Evers incorporate digital media as a new material that adds layers of meaning to the traditional role of the hand in their work. Their *Stolen Jewels* series (2007) blurs the distinction between art, craft and design. At a distance, these pieces read as big, flashy gems. On closer inspection, the gems are actually low-resolution images of famous jewels, such as the Hope Diamond, taken from Google's search engine, doctored and transferred to scored leather.

"*The New Materiality* shows us that the lines between art, design and craft are becoming more porous as each co-opts various theoretical, technical and philosophical aspects of the other, asking us to scrutinize the distance between them in contemporary creative practice," said Fo Wilson, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee professor and curator of *The New Materiality*.

Donald Fortescue and Lawrence LaBianca's *Sounding* (2008) is one of the largest pieces featured and explores the relationship between not only art, design and craft, but also technology and nature. The artwork was inspired by Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and consists of a cabriole-legged table, which the artists filled with rocks and lowered into the ocean for two months, and a hydrophone placed near the table, which recorded the ambient sound. Fortescue and LaBianca exhibit the work with an oversized hornlike funnel, tied together with zip ties, which amplifies the recorded sound.

"*The New Materiality: Digital Dialogues at the Boundaries of Contemporary Craft* pushes us to think critically about craft theory and craft practice," said Jon Prown, Chipstone Foundation director. "The exhibition brings together the work of artists who use digital content to augment and alter our understanding of what craft is and what it does. In the process, she questions the time-honored binary of 'hand vs. machine,' and challenges artists and audiences alike to question where the boundaries of craft now lie."

Also represented in the exhibition are Brian Boldon, Shaun Bullens, Sonya Clark, Lia Cook, E.G. Crichton, Wendy Maruyama, Christy Matson, Cat Mazza, Nathalie Miebach, Tim Tate, Susan Working, and Mark Zirpel.

The New Materiality: Digital Dialogues at the Boundaries of Contemporary Craft is organized by the Fuller Craft Museum and is organized at the Milwaukee Art Museum by the Chipstone Foundation. It is curated by Fo Wilson, assistant professor in the Department of Art and Design at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

ABOUT THE CHIPSTONE FOUNDATION

The Chipstone Foundation is a decorative arts foundation whose mission is preserving and interpreting their collection, as well as stimulating research and education in the decorative arts.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM

The Milwaukee Art Museum's far-reaching holdings include more than 20,000 works spanning antiquity to the present day. With a history dating back to 1888, the Museum houses a collection with strengths in 19th- and 20th-century American and European art, contemporary art, American decorative arts, and folk and self-taught art. The Museum includes the Santiago Calatrava-designed Quadracci Pavilion, named by *Time* magazine as "Best Design of 2001." For more information, please visit www.mam.org.

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PROGRAMMING FOR THE NEW MATERIALITY

Gallery Talk with the Curator

1:30 PM

Tuesday, May 3 | Fo Wilson

MAM After Dark: New Mixology

Friday, March 11, 5 PM–midnight

Lecture: Dialogues on Innovation

Lubar Auditorium

Saturday, April 16, 2 PM–4 PM

All around the world cities are developing innovation labs that bring together art, industry, design and technology. Can we do that in Milwaukee? Come hear leading innovators discuss 21st century cooperative models.