

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Museum of Contemporary Craft announces
publication of the first book focused on its collection**
Unpacking the Collection documents Museum of Contemporary Craft's
role in the American Craft Movement

Book Celebration · March 10, 2009, 7:30 PM
Powell's City of Books, 1005 W Burnside, Portland

PORTLAND, OR – February 24, 2009 – Museum of Contemporary Craft, an internationally recognized center for contemporary craft founded in 1937, announces the release of *Unpacking the Collection: Selections from the Museum of Contemporary Craft*. The book is the first publication dedicated to the Museum's collection, and provides a significant contribution to the documentation of the American Craft Movement.

Featuring selected works from the Museum's collection of nearly 1,000 objects, *Unpacking the Collection* documents how changes in artistic practice have affected craft from the 1930s to the present. By way of artwork, essays, texts, archival photos and an exhibition chronology, the book charts the evolution of the museum as a community resource, drawing connections between the Museum's collection and its exhibition history. The book is the first to showcase many early and transitional works by craft artists who have become leaders in the field, including Betty Feves, Jack Lenor Larsen, Sam Maloof, John Mason and Peter Voukos. The publication also concentrates on artists who played a central role in creating the Pacific Northwest's distinct craft identity, including Ray Grimm, Leroy Setziol, Ken Shores and Ramona Solberg.

"This publication provides readers with the opportunity to spend time with works from the collection and to connect many previously undocumented stories about Northwest artists to a broader history of American craft," said Namita Gupta Wiggers, curator, Museum of Contemporary Craft and author of the book. "Because the Museum is fundamentally a civic and educational institution, we are thrilled to bring this collection – a public resource – to a wider audience."

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Museum of Contemporary Craft

Museum of Contemporary Craft was founded in 1937 as the Oregon Ceramic Studio to provide education and build new appreciation for modern ceramics. One of the only outlets to show and sell contemporary craft in the region, the Museum has regularly connected the work of artists from the Pacific Northwest with those of national acclaim. Today, Museum of Contemporary Craft continues to be a center where people connect creatively, professionally and socially through craft and dialogue.

Museum of Contemporary Craft created *Unpacking the Collection* with careful consideration to all aspects of production – from the selection of the typeface, to the binding, paper choices and portable size. The book’s format is structured as a new and highly accessible model of presenting a craft collection. The volume is fully illustrated by rich color photographs, with a special focus on materials, texture and form.

Unpacking the Collection: Selections from the Museum of Contemporary Craft is authored by Curator Namita Gupta Wiggers and edited by Anjali Gupta, executive director and editor, *ART LIES*. It includes essays by Janet Koplos, senior editor, *Art in America*, and Glenn Adamson, head of graduate studies, Victoria and Albert Museum. The publication is available for sale in The Gallery at Museum of Contemporary Craft, and can be ordered by contacting 503.546.2654 or gallery@MuseumofContemporaryCraft.org

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT UNPACKING THE COLLECTION

“This concise book paints not only a vivid picture of one museum’s travails and the collection that’s given life to its exhibitions, but also an amazingly accurate portrait of craft in the United States from the 1930s onward.”

—Andrew Wagner, editor-in-chief, *American Craft*

“Another title for this useful, insightful catalog of collection could be *Unpeeling the Collection*. Like an onion, Namita Wiggers peels back layer after layer of information and history giving us a revealing picture of regional collecting that has not been previously explored.”

—Garth Clark, art historian, critic and gallerist

“As a reader, I’m learning a lot from this book about the Northwest, its impact on artists and the issues and influences that run under the surface for makers. My effort to understand what it means to be an artist in the Northwest by studying Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, et al. was only half the story. This catalog gives me the other, perhaps more relevant, half. As an artist, I’m glad to have *Ambition* presented with such an insightful, clear discussion – of the object itself, my intentions and the relationships between context, concept and the viewer.”

—Lou Cabeen, associate professor, University of Washington and featured artist, *Unpacking the Collection*

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Museum of Contemporary Craft

BOOK CELEBRATION

The Museum will hosts a public celebration for the book Tuesday, March 10 at 7:30 PM at Powell's City of Books, 1005 W Burnside, Portland. Namita Gupta Wiggers will join designer Katherine Bovee, photographer Dan Kvitka and local artists featured in the book. Following a talk by Wiggers, attendees will have the opportunity to have their book signed by its producers and featured artists.

ABOUT AUTHOR NAMITA GUPTA WIGGERS

Namita Gupta Wiggers is curator at Museum of Contemporary Craft, directing the exhibition, collection and public programs for the Museum. Wiggers has been a contributing writer to *The Journal of Museum Education*, *ART LIES* and *Metalsmith*. Wiggers holds a Bachelor of Arts in art history from Rice University and a Master of Arts in art history from the University of Chicago.

ABOUT EDITOR ANJALI GUPTA

Anjali Gupta is executive director and editor of *ART LIES*, a contemporary art quarterly published in Houston, TX. Her writing has appeared in numerous periodicals such as *tema celeste*, *Art Papers*, *Art Asia Pacific*, *artUS* and *Public Art Review*, in addition to being editor of the award-winning *CADÁVER EXQUISITO* (UNAM, 2007).

ABOUT MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY CRAFT

Committed to the advancement of craft since 1937, Museum of Contemporary Craft is one of Oregon's oldest cultural institutions. Centrally located in Portland's Pearl District, the Museum is nationally acclaimed for its curatorial program and is a vibrant center for investigation and dialogue, expanding the definition of craft and the way audiences experience it. Visit the Museum online at www.MuseumofContemporaryCraft.org.

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Museum of Contemporary Craft



CAPTIONS

1. Exterior, Contemporary Crafts Gallery, c. 1970
2. Hildur Bjarnadóttir, *Frippery*, 2005; velvet pile embroidery on vintage table cloth; 48 x 48 inches; Gift of MaryAnn Deffenbaugh; 2007.12.01
3. Peter Voulkos, *Untitled*, c. 1960; ceramic; 13.5 x 8 x 18 inches; Gift of the Margaret Murray Gordon Estate; 2004.10.03
4. Leroy Setziol, *Teak Door*, 1966; teak; 7 x 3 feet; Contemporary Crafts Gallery purchase; 1998.66.01
5. Erik Gronborg, *American Anatomy Chart*, c. 1967; stoneware with stamped relief; 3 x 13 inches diameter; Unknown Gift; 1998.00.16
6. Book cover, *Unpacking the Collection: Selections from the Museum of Contemporary Craft*
7. Founding ladies of the Oregon Ceramic Studio, c. late 1930s
8. Jack Lenor Larsen, *Remoulade*, 1954; machine-woven linen, cotton, silk; 108 x 50 inches; Gift of Hal Cary; 1998.91.34

These images are available as high resolution JPEG files at our online press center:
www.MuseumofContemporaryCraft.org/presscenter