

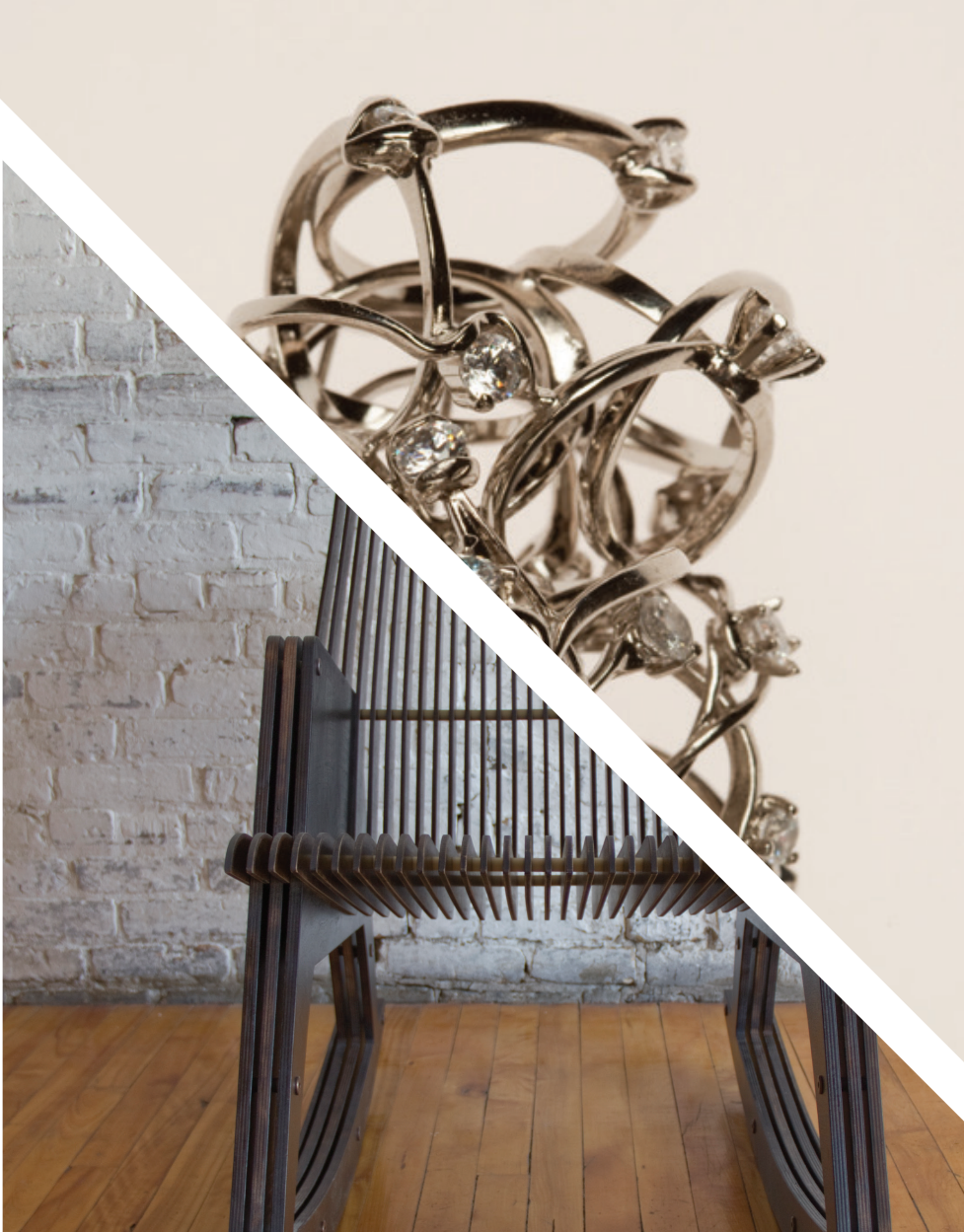
# TAKING SHAPE

Celebrating the Windgate Fellowship

Opening Exhibition November 1 - 3, 2013

Sculptural Objects Functional Art + Design Fair

Festival Hall, Navy Pier  
Chicago, Illinois



THE CENTER  
FOR CRAFT  
CREATIVITY  
& DESIGN

Extended Exhibition January 24 - May 2, 2014

Benchspace Gallery & Workshop

The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design  
Asheville, North Carolina

# TAKING SHAPE

Celebrating the Windgate Fellowship

Foreword by **Stephanie Moore**  
Executive Director at The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design

**JooHyun Lee**

*Untitled: 23 (twenty three minutes)*

2012

labradorite

6.5" x 4" x 3"



**The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design made a commitment to support the next generation of craft artists by establishing the Windgate Fellowship in 2006.**

The program targeted a critical need of funding undergraduates at a time when most funds were directed towards graduate level students. The Center considers each of the \$15,000 awards to be a significant investment directed toward the student's autonomy and growth.

We have learned a great deal from the Fellows. They continue to inspire and inform the Center's work by allowing us to consider new ideas as the field of craft evolves. **Craft has an inherent tension when it relates to traditional boundaries between media, technology, and diversity. The next generation exploits these tensions and allows fresh dialogue.** What will be the future issues and challenges for the field? These

Fellows will have answers. Their work combines a reverence for skill and material with informed ideas that are built on a solid foundation nurtured in academia.

The *Taking Shape* exhibition marks the achievement of an idea conceptualized many years ago – to host an exhibition of previous Fellows at SOFA Chicago which is the country's foremost art fair dedicated to sculptural objects, functional art, and design. This year's event will be held October 31-November 3. We are thankful to **SOFA Chicago**, for allowing us a place to make this vision a reality and to the **John and Robyn Horn Foundation** and the **North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Cultural Resources**, for their financial support.

This exhibition also allows the Center to recognize all the students who were nominated for the distinguished pool of candidates; the faculty who spent hours coaching prospective applicants through the selection process; the roster of reviewers who took great care in offering constructive criticism for hundreds of applicants; and the 22 Fellows who have joined us at SOFA Chicago this year to celebrate and build the program. **We are forever grateful to the Windgate Charitable Foundation whose longstanding commitment over the past eight years has allowed 80 Fellows the opportunity to pursue their dreams.**

“Craft has an inherent tension when it relates to traditional boundaries between media, technology, and diversity.”

-Stephanie Moore  
Executive Director

The Center for Craft Creativity & Design

History has taught us that to meaningfully enact change over a long period, more than good ideas are needed. Dedicated people and financial support as well as a sound case statement and set of long-range goals are the catalysts that transform great ideas into successful achievements. For the field of contemporary craft, The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design (The Center) in Asheville, North Carolina, has acted as both catalyst and sustainer since its establishment in 1998, fundamentally reshaping the way craft is examined, appreciated, and promoted through a series of exceptional research, exhibition, and publication grants; yearly issue-based Craft Think Tanks; educational programs; internships that train the next generation of museum professionals; and support for artists. With the backing of the Windgate Charitable Foundation as well as other donors, **its visionary board and staff has led The Center to become one of the de facto thought - leaders in the field today.**

While all of its programs can and should be heralded, The Center's support of emerging craft artists is particularly exemplary. During the 2005 Craft Think Tank, participants from major museums, universities and art schools, writers, and independent curators, established the parameters for what would become the Windgate Fellowship.[i] Rather than reinventing the wheel, the Craft Think Tank members and the board of The Center looked to existing models, including the Watson Fellowship program, the International Sculpture Center (ISC) Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Awards, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation Fellowships, and the National Endowment for the Arts Visual Arts Fellowships, to devise its program.[ii] Additional foundations established in the 20th century, most notably the Pew Foundation for the Arts, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and United States Artists, among others, have also taken a leadership role in providing research grants that signal the importance of investing in artists and their practice. By recognizing the value of providing monetary support to artists so that creativity, risk-taking, and skill-building can occur without impediments, these programs have made immeasurable contributions to the arts as a whole. Yet they mostly focus on more established artists, rather than those in early training. Universities and art schools have tried to fill this gap, with many offering research-based grants to undergraduate artists, but overall, the opportunities for meaningful support for artists at this stage of their career are too few. And craft, while a grant-receiving field for all of the fellowships cited above, is only one discipline competing for limited dollars.

**With this knowledge in mind, in 2006, The Center established the Windgate Fellowships, a program that awards funds to 10 graduating seniors with "extraordinary skill in craft."** In a structure that may be unique in the United States, over 50 national universities participate by identifying and nominating two artists each for the fellowship. Since 2006, the number of institutions and artist nominations has steadily climbed, culminating in a record 114 artists from 66 institutions in 2012.[iii] There is no question that this increase is due to the outstanding reputation of the program as well as the outreach that The Center undertakes each year to cultivate relationships with universities and art schools.

Windgate Fellows have come from all regions of the United States as well as from many different types of schools, including large programs such as the University of the Arts, Philadelphia; the Rhode Island School of Design; Virginia Commonwealth University; California College of the Arts; and the Massachusetts College of Art and Design and lesser-known schools such as The Institute for American Indian Arts; the Appalachian Center for Craft at Tennessee Tech University; Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University; and Murray State University. **After a rigorous review of each artist's work and specific project proposal by a panel of past awardees, artists, museum curators, and academics, the fellows chosen receive \$15,000 each to pursue their goals.**

"Transformative," "a priceless opportunity and experience," "door-opening," "it influenced the way I saw myself as an artist," and "a rare gift" are only some of the general sentiments expressed by past fellows. The fellowship's financial support of equipment, materials, and travel; its role as a bridge between college and graduate school or life as a working artist; and its instilling of confidence in young artists that their work is valued are all cited by the fellows as critical factors when describing its impact. **As Dustin Farnsworth, a 2010 fellow, wrote: "The grant fostered bravery to take risks, the freedom flexibility to purchase materials, and the chance to seek and engage career-enhancing opportunities. By working for makers with strengths in areas where I felt deficits, I was able to reinforce and tighten my own craft processes..."** Aaron McIntosh, a 2006 fellow, summed up another important legacy – the extensive network of artists and arts professionals cultivated through the fellowship. "All the exhibitions, workshops, schools, museums and libraries, as well as craft conferences and fiber symposia, provided my first professional contacts out in the larger fields of textiles, craft and fine arts. Many of the artists, educators, writers, curators and gallerists I met...have become vital parts of my professional and social networks.... And perhaps this larger connectivity of individuals committed to craft pursuits and inquiry will become the most enduring legacy of this important fellowship."

**"Craft continues to shift and respond to cultural and economic changes in the world, with younger artists often taking the lead in forging new paths to address these fundamental differences"**

As the Windgate Fellowship nears its 10th anniversary, two initiatives that will help the program take stock are planned. One is fellow-driven: Dustin Farnsworth approached The Center about convening past and present fellows so that they may connect and reflect with each other as well as discuss ways to strengthen the fellowship in the future. Called *Towards 10 and Connected*, the meeting will occur during SOFA Chicago 2013. The second initiative is *Taking Shape*, the first exhibition to survey artists awarded the Windgate Fellowship as a group. Drawn from recent objects made by artists whose fellowships occurred in 2006–2010, the exhibition highlights the diversity of aesthetics, processes, and materials found in craft today. Ceramics, fiber art, furniture, glass, jewelry, metalwork, photography, and sculpture are represented in the work of Tom Alward, Josh Copus, Andrea Donnelly, Dustin Farnsworth, Jenny Fine, Erin Rose Gardner, Kathleen Janvier, JooHyun Lee, Aaron McIntosh, Nate Moren, Alexis Myre, Elizabeth Staiger, Amelia Toelke, and Thoryn Ziemba.

Taken as a whole, the work in the exhibition clearly embodies the maxims used to describe craft in recent years—the pieces are expansive in concept, move beyond media-specific boundaries, and intersect with other artistic disciplines. **Craft continues to shift and respond to cultural and economic changes in the world, with younger artists often taking the lead in forging new paths to address these fundamental differences. Yet within this realm, it is heartening to see young artists remaining committed to skill and craftsmanship.** These qualities ensure that many traditions will endure, even if the end result is beyond what we can conceive of today.

**The intersection of the craft and design fields continues to produce fresh and innovative work. The best hybrid pieces offer great design and craftsmanship, playing to the core strengths of each discipline equally.**

Nate Moren's training in furniture design and cabinetmaking provided him with the tools necessary to make the leap from one-of-a-kind pieces and commission work to designing for production. *Topographic Rocker* (2012) updates the traditional rocking chair form with sleek lines and generous proportions. The airy, slat-based shape is designed for ease of productivity, though its finishing and joinery speak to the quality associated with hand-construction.

Tom Alward's Windgate Fellowship in 2008 provided funds for travel to Virginia and Australia, where he studied local clays, studio practices, and viewed the landscape as an aesthetic as well as a material source. For Alward, "The way I looked at materials, pots and the environment had swiftly changed." Upon returning to his native Arizona, he built his own Anagama kiln and began working for Don Reitz, who is known for his innovative firing techniques and expressive pots. Alward's *Vessel* (2013) can be viewed as a product of both his Windgate experiences and lessons learned from Reitz. Its torqued, craggy form is evocative of geologic outcroppings and naturally occurring landscape forms. Alward's reverence for and connection to his material are palpable in the dynamism and immediacy of this work; the complex color variations and surface are a product of hand-working locally sourced clays and the labor-intensive Anagama wood-firing process.

Like Alward, Josh Copus's vessels such as *Jar* (2012) have a strong connection to the landscape through their materials. Copus digs clay from the mountains, river bottoms, and tobacco fields of Western North Carolina and he wood-fires his pieces to enhance the properties of the clay as well as bring out any possible intangible qualities. "Every pot is infused with the qualities and character of my clay; whether it's the subtlety of its dark iron body breaking through...or the drama of its diverse particle size exposed through a facet, the qualities of my clay effect what I make..." By virtue of its sense of place, *Jar* also speaks to the rich history of North Carolina functional pottery. Copus expands on these traditions by imbuing this form with his own perspective on color, texture, and delineated space.

The work of Andrea Donnelly and Aaron McIntosh demonstrates the wide diversity of approaches in contemporary fiber. Donnelly is known for two bodies of hand-woven cloth: those that incorporate body images and those that draw inspiration from inkblots. *Blot #3: Blot and Stain* (2009) first appears as an abstracted, mirror image, Robert Motherwell-esque in its palette and composition. But Donnelly's process of weaving, staining, unweaving, and reweaving elicits stronger examination of its formal properties, challenging the viewer to reconsider relationships between positive and negative space and psychological meaning. For Donnelly, the inkblot is her "chosen symbol of subjective/collective experience." "Hand-woven cloth is used as its own reference... drawing on sensory memories and the intimate connections we all have to cloth in its many domestic forms."



Nate Moren with  
Tandem Made  
*Topographic Rocker*  
2012  
masonite, plywood,  
nylon spacers, hardware  
37" x 22" x 31"



Josh Copus  
*Jar*  
2012  
woodfired ceramics  
30" x 26" diameter



Tom Alward  
*Vessel*  
2013  
local clay, stoneware,  
wood fired  
10.5" x 5" x 3.5"



**Andrea Donnelly**  
*Blot #3: Blot and Stain*  
 2009  
 handwoven cotton, textile pigment  
 37.5" x 53.3"

**Dustin Farnsworth's** highly detailed sculptures also combine social commentary with architectural and urbanistic forms. Hand-carved figures and decaying building fragments speak to the relationship between workers and American industry at a time when depressed economic circumstances have crippled cities. Farnsworth is interested in what happens when industry fails to deliver on its promise of success. His sculptures such as *The Understood Weight* (2013) "blur the line between realism and vintage plaything, encapsulating the eerily life-qualities of marionettes and their inherent innocence to examine the relationship between human beings and their physical and mental environment." By painstakingly creating intricate stage sets for the figures to inhabit, he draws direct attention to both his craftsmanship and the larger message at hand.

Like Farnsworth, **Jenny Fine** creates emotionally loaded portraits of people experiencing distress and loss, though her subject matter is her family rather than a specific element of society. *While Afraid of Forgetting* (2007) is a personal narrative, its theme is universal. Fine engages a variety of historical and contemporary film processes in her work. This series represents her first use of the wet-plate collodion process, which allowed her to consider the photograph as object rather than simply as image.



**Dustin Farnsworth**  
*The Understood Weight*  
 2013  
 basswood, poplar,  
 plywood, MDF, veneer, rope,  
 steel, and polychrome  
 13" x 13" x 42"

**Aaron McIntosh** also references domesticity and intimacy through the creation of textile panels and objects embedded with text and image messaging. In *Fragment #3* (Roses are Red) from 2012, McIntosh disrupts his source material, an erotic magazine meant for individual pleasure, with sweetly patterned piecework that recalls a bouquet of flowers. Here, the frisson between traditions of piecework and quilting and new technologies such as digital printing results in a complex narrative of sexual emotions and personal desires, of family traditions and cultural artifacts. McIntosh's objects "extract both ambiguous and specific bits of sexual language and illustration and piece together new content which subverts the original messages and context," thereby creating a new archetype ideally suited to explore issues of gender and identity.

**Aaron McIntosh**  
*Fragment #3*  
 2012  
 digital textile print,  
 vintage fabric, piecework  
 20" x 26"



**Erin Rose Gardner**

*Engagement Ring Brooch*

2010

found rings, cz, steel, silver,  
rhodium plated

Photo: Richard Gehrke

3" x 3"



**Elizabeth Staiger**

*Unhappy Family*

2012

silver, 14k gold, shell,  
glass, cameo, pearls, coral,  
quartz, crystal, garnet,  
cubic zirconia, blue topaz,  
moonstone

2.25" x 8.5"



**Jenny Fine**

*Mourning Ole Sister*

2008

tintype

10" x 10"

**Taking Shape** features six artists who come from a jewelry and metalsmithing background—Erin Rose Gardner, Kathleen Janvier, JooHyun Lee, Alexis Myre, Elizabeth Staiger, and Amelia Toelke— though their work here stretches beyond jewelry to include sculpture and hybrid objects. As seen in this exhibition, diverse approaches to scale, form, construction, and materials have yielded a plethora of meanings and interpretations, signaling the many avenues of inquiry being pursued in this area of craft by young artists.

**Erin Rose Gardner's** research into mass-produced, commercial jewelry has led to a series of pieces that offers commentary on jewelry's value in society as a symbol of status and love. Her cast silver engagement ring and fake diamond brooches, such as *Engagement Ring Brooch* (2010), call into question an engagement ring's power and purpose. By formally challenging the tradition as well as questioning the role of craft within jewelry production, Gardner opens the dialogue beyond questions of ornament.

Like Gardner, **Elizabeth Staiger** also deals with ornamentation in her work, using recognizable symbols of wealth and status to convey commentary on consumption and need. In her view, "we sinfully indulge ourselves with such objects." And, though she professes "to battle with this indulgence," she invests some of her work, such as *The Unhappy Family* (2012), with semiprecious materials such as pearls, cameos, garnets, moonstones, blue topaz, and citrine, telegraphing luxury in ways that most artist-made jewelry from today does not. The material message of rarity and value is also underscored here by the influence of historic miniatures and renaissance jewelry on its form.

The pleasures and results of weight-bearing jewelry are explored by **JooHyun Lee**. She hand-carves stones into simple forms, allowing the material's natural properties to act as decoration. Quietly meditative, the pieces, such as *Untitled: 23*, are tactile and meant to engage directly with the body. Lee's jewelry, unlike many artists of her generation, offers no commentary, narrative, innovative technique, or form. Rather, she is focused on jewelry's therapeutic properties. She believes that the energy and pressure that she puts into a piece is transferred onto the wearer. "Differences between the jewellery pieces and bodily conditions become less obvious as the jeweler adapts to the body, warming up to body temperature when worn, and seemingly filling up curves and contours until becoming one with both the body and mind."

**Kathleen Janvier** explores the minimalist tropes of reductive form and repetition in *We Carry Volumes - All These Empty Pages* (2013). Yet the warmth of the copper and obvious hand-working of the sheets and cords demonstrate that the artist is not solely interested in strategies of mechanics. Janvier's work operates equally as wearable art and ornamental sculpture, asking the viewer to contemplate meaning within its structure. And while the artist does not explicitly speak about narrative, she does remark on the desirability of having something close to the body that knows you: "The benefit grows in naming it a companion, in gathering it to your chest, and finding comfort in its nearness."

**Amelia Toelke**

*Voici/Voila*

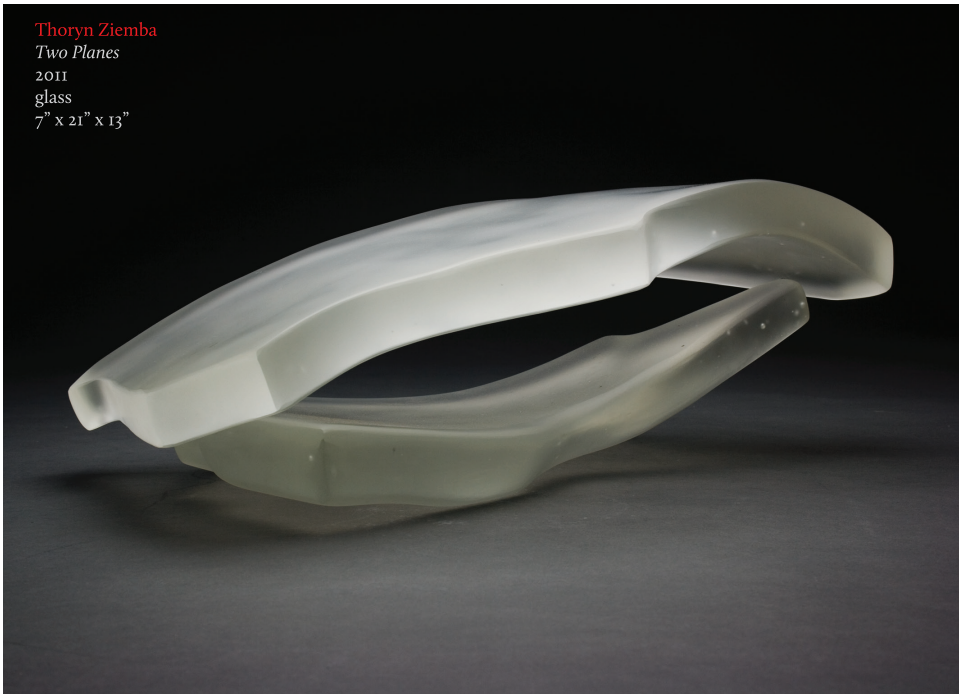
2010

powdercoated steel,  
copper, chain

8' x 2'

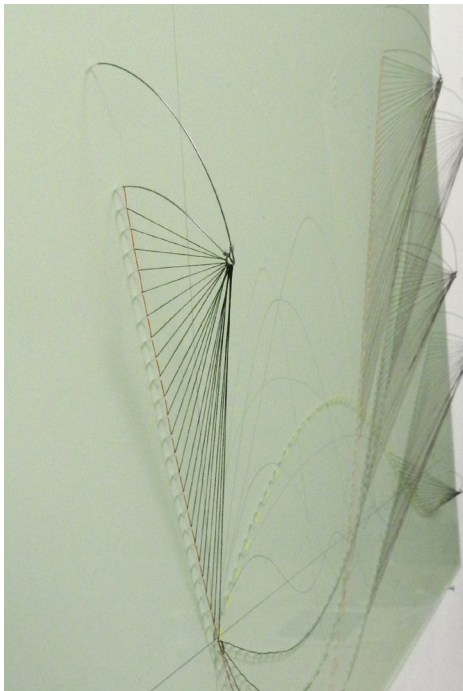


Thoryn Ziembra  
*Two Planes*  
 2011  
 glass  
 7" x 21" x 13"



Reminiscent of tectonic plates caught mid-shift, **Thoryn Ziembra's** *Two Planes* (2011) offers an elemental look at glass sculpture. Balance, the merging of two distinct but related constructivist forms and their creation of positive and negative space, and opacity all come together in this work to challenge perspective. With its powerful simplicity, Ziembra's piece stands in opposition to the tendency for surface texture and deliberate decorative effects so often found in contemporary glass today. The risk of such a stance is not lost on the artist, "Process and time are the most important components of my work and I use them to keep my conscious mind out of the game."

Alexis Myre  
*Landscape of Flight*  
 2013  
 acrylic, thread, pencil, wire,  
 paint (mixed media)  
 15" x 21"



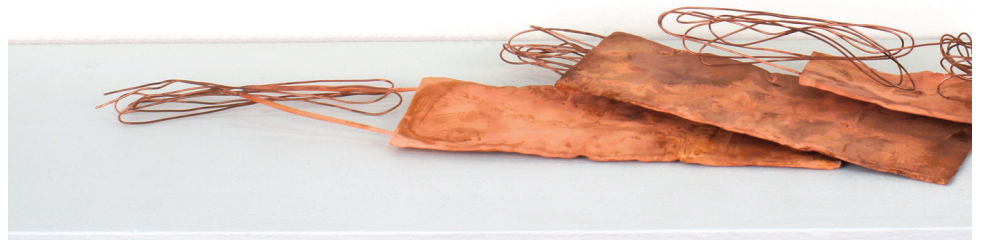
At the opposite end of the spectrum is **Alexis Myre's** *Landscape of Flight* (2013). Part drawing, part sculpture, the work recalls the drawings in space and kineticism of the Venezuelan artist Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt) as well as the early constructed wire, thread, and plastic jewelry of artists such as Marta Breis. Myre speaks of the individual properties of materials and finding ways to highlight their differences within a unified concept: "pencil often represents logical systems such as mathematics; thread symbolizes flexibility, softness, and connection...metal and plastic...highlighting the necessary rigidity of structure and core...natural found objects [left] alone or only slightly altered...These objects and materials come together to form little complex universes representing connectedness, volatility, dynamism, adaptability, and stability."

As this exhibition attests, the Windgate Fellowship selection panels seemingly have an unerring eye for spotting the best and brightest of rising craftspeople. A review of these artists' post-fellowship curriculum vitae shows acceptance into the most competitive and rigorous graduate programs, inclusion in national exhibitions and publications, and gallery representation for the majority of Windgate Fellows. The fact that so many of these artists are making a living from their craft is remarkable, and while the hard work and talent all come from the artists themselves, **the support of the Windgate Fellowship has been invaluable in making their careers possible.**

-Cindi Strauss  
 Curator, Modern and Contemporary  
 Decorative Arts and Design  
 The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

**Amelia Toelke's** artistic practice also includes jewelry, sculpture, and drawing, though it is in her sculpture that all three disciplines come together seamlessly. She says that her "unbiased approach to making relies on the fusion of material, process, and content..."—a philosophy that is evident in her work. Toelke's strength is the graphic and monumental nature of her compositions. Informed by jewelry's vocabulary of making and meaning, architectural ornament, and commercial signage, pieces such as *Voici/Voilà* (2010), recontextualize accepted forms without sacrificing meaning. Its power lies in its ability to engage viewers with directness, asking them to consider alternative ways to consider ornament's role in society and daily life.

Kathleen Janvier  
*We Carry Volumes-  
 All These Empty Pages*  
 2013  
 copper, rose gold plate  
 8.5" x 2.5" x .5" each





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**The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design** is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit devoted to advancing the understanding of craft by encouraging and supporting research, critical dialogue, and professional development in the United States.

**The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design**

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Please note: All quotes are taken from the artist's submissions to the curator unless otherwise noted.

[i] Participants in the 2005 Craft Think Tank were Glenn Adamson, Carmine Branagan, Diane Douglas, Stuart Kestenbaum, Mark Richard Leach, Martha Drexler Lynn, Lydia Matthews, David Revere McFadden, Jean McLaughlin, Tina Oldknow, Suzanne Ramljak, Howard Risatti, Ken Trapp, and Consuelo Jimenez Underwood.

[ii] I would like to thank Marilyn Zapf, assistant director of The Center for Craft Creativity & Design for providing this and other information relating to the establishment of the Windgate Fellowships.

[iii] The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design. Windgate Fellowship & Museum Internship Report, Years 2011 & 2012, 6.

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