

# Center for Craft in Asheville, NC, Offer Look at Early Craft Movement

The Center for Craft in Asheville, NC, is presenting *Crafted Roots: Stories and Objects from the Appalachian Mountains*, on view in the John Cram Partner Gallery, through Oct. 30, 2020. The exhibition is curated by Michael Hatch, Class of 2020, MA in Critical Craft Studies, Warren Wilson College.

The exhibition at the Center for Craft will examine the foundational moments in the late 1800s and early 1900s that laid the groundwork for the thriving craft scene found in the Asheville region today.

This exhibition is the first of a series developed by Warren Wilson College putting the national craft landscape in the context of the local Asheville community, other creative disciplines and the liberal arts.

In the past, there was a stark contrast between small urban centers like Asheville and the remote rural areas that surrounded them. The turn of the century marked a major transition for the people living in these rural places, because urban missionaries arrived from other parts of the country with the goal of “uplifting” rural communities through the revival and marketing of traditional craft techniques. These actions proved successful in what we would call the “branding” of Appalachian craft today. Contemporary scholars have critically examined the missionaries’ manipulation of “traditional” craft designs to appeal to urban markets and their role in defining Appalachia and its people to areas outside of the region.

This story has been represented and examined in exhibitions and texts for more than 100 years. *Crafted Roots* provides a unique perspective through the use of audio recordings, historical documents, images and objects from the archives and permanent collections of the Southern Highlands Craft Guild. This is the first exhibition that allows the urban missionaries and regional craftspeople to speak for themselves through audio extracts from oral history recordings projected into the gallery.

“I feel oral histories are an important component of any multidisciplinary research methodology,” said Michael Hatch, the curator of *Crafted Roots*. “In academic circles, we spend a lot of time talking about people and referencing others who have previously talked about them. Oral histories allow people to speak for themselves. They provide a path to de-essentialize our thinking about groups of people by focusing on individual identities within these groups.”

Hatch’s research includes three years of listening, extracting and editing previously untapped oral history recordings from the Guild’s archives, and it serves as the springboard for this curatorial project.

“This exhibition asks you to de-accelerate, to actively listen,” Hatch said. “Eric Franklin, of the Loveland Museum, one of my program mentors, says that when he listens to these recordings he feels as if he is in the room with the narrators, sitting across the table from them as they tell him their stories. That is the feeling that this exhibition seeks to evoke through scenography that evokes parlors and cabins. You are invited to sit and spend time with transcripts and photo albums as you listen to missionaries and regional craftspeople recall memories from the early 20th century.”

“We are thrilled to host *Crafted Roots* in the Center for Craft’s new John Cram Partner Gallery” said Assistant Director and Curator Marilyn Zapf. “Hatch’s well-researched exhibition shines a light on the history of how Asheville earned its reputation as an internationally recognized hub for high-quality craft production. As we continue to steward craft’s legacy in western North Carolina, hearing first-hand accounts from and seeing objects made during the Craft Revival evoke questions and reflections about craft’s role in regional development that continue to be relevant today.”

Hatch is a member of the inaugural graduating Class of 2020 of the MA in



Southern Highlands Craft Guild wood carvers

Critical Craft Studies at Warren Wilson College.

“This program is the first of its kind,” said Namita Gupta Wiggers, program director. “Michael Hatch is one of nine inaugural graduates of this low-residency graduate program that focuses on craft histories and theory. His exhibition clearly puts his research questions into public view. Taking time in *Crafted Roots* will help visitors understand how craft has come to be associated with the region, as well as how stereotypes and myths are constructed through what is – and is not – publicly available from archives. Michael’s exhibition shows research in action that can shift how craft is understood as part of culture and community.”

Hatch’s project connects program curriculum and research with his own experience in the craft field. For more than 20 years, Hatch has operated Crucible Glassworks, an Asheville-area glassblowing studio and gallery. He currently serves as the vice president of the Board of Trustees for the Southern Highland Craft Guild. Hatch began the two-year MA in Critical Craft Studies program each semester in intensive on-site residencies in North Carolina, alternating between July on the Warren Wilson College Campus and January in Asheville, with classes taking place at the Center for Craft, founding program partner. Guided by international faculty from multiple disciplines, the program uses research as an applied practice to connect students’ project work in the Swannanoa/Asheville area to that in their own hometowns.

*Crafted Roots* is presented in collaboration between program partners Warren Wilson College and the Center for Craft. This exhibition was developed by Hatch as his final Practicum Project towards degree completion. Special thanks to Nikki Joseff, curator at the Southern Highland Craft Guild, for guidance and for arranging the loan of objects and archives from the Guild’s collection.

Warren Wilson College is a vibrant, independent college with an innovative curriculum that purposefully integrates the liberal arts with community engagement and work experiences to prepare students for not only professional success, but also a life of meaning. Visit ([www.warren-wilson.edu](http://www.warren-wilson.edu)). To learn more about the MA in Critical Craft Studies, visit ([www.macraftstudieswwc.com](http://www.macraftstudieswwc.com)).

The Southern Highland Craft Guild is a non-profit, educational organization established in 1930 to cultivate the crafts and makers of the Southern Highlands for the purpose of shared resources, education, marketing and conservation. The Southern Highland Craft Guild is an authorized concessioner of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

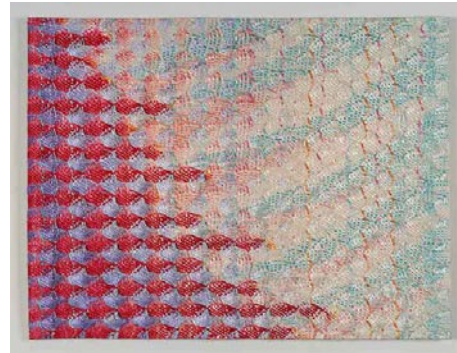
Founded in 1996, the Center for Craft (formerly The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design) is the leading organization in the United States identifying and convening craft makers, curators, and researchers, and matching them with resources, tools, and networks to advance their careers. Over the years, 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.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings or visit ([www.centerforcraft.org](http://www.centerforcraft.org)).

# Center for Craft in Asheville, NC, Offers 2020 Curatorial Fellows Exhibit

The Center for Craft in Asheville, NC, is presenting the first exhibition from its 2020 Curatorial Fellows program, *The Computer Pays its Debt*, which explores the connection between technology and textiles, on view through Oct. 9, 2020

This exhibition illuminates the direct connection between computing technology and weaving, and is now on view at the Center for Craft following a three-month closure due to the coronavirus pandemic. Viewable by pre-registration through Oct. 9, 2020, the show positions women who worked with technology and textiles at the heart of the information age. Kayleigh Perkov, 2020 Curatorial Fellow, drew the exhibition’s title and theme from a 1966 *New York Times* interview with IBM computer scientist and weaver Janice Lourie, creator of the Textile Graphics software, in which she argues that it was “about time that [computing’s] debt to the weaving trade was paid back.”



Work by Lia Cook

The statement links computers to the nineteenth-century Jacquard Loom, which used punch cards as proto-programming. The loom directly influenced Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace, considered the first programmer, when they invented the analytical engine – the precursor to our modern computers – in the nineteenth century. Perkov and the ten renowned artists in the exhibition, including Lourie, Sonia Sheridan, Sonya Rapoport, and Lia Cook, recenter the role of women in technology by elevating other voices and histories beyond Lovelace, offering up new ways of seeing the relationship between identity, creativity, and technology.

Participating artist Daniela Rosner, a collaborator on Core Memory Quilt, explores “the process by which we build technologies,” was inspired by archival footage of two women weaving “core memory ropes” that stored programming for the Apollo space missions in an example of electronic-textile hybridity. She and collaborator Samantha Shorey saw an immediate link between these women’s actions and textile production. “We began



View of the exhibition

to think about memory as both computer memory and in terms of often gendered processes like quilting and craftwork,” she notes. “What you might think of as a quilt – made of pieces of fabric left behind and associated with being unpaid, unthinking work done mostly by women – was actually critical to launching the Apollo missions to the moon and back.”

Like the other participating artists, Rosner uses craft as a lens to “think about how things get made, and who makes them.” Through her piece, she questions “what kinds of bodies, hands, and locales are involved in the production of technology, and how those choices in the development process can shape what’s made possible and what’s closed off.”

This is the first 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 to Asheville as part of the Center’s larger conversation around craft and its evolution. Learn more at ([centerforcraft.org](http://centerforcraft.org)).

Reopening in August under limited hours, 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.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings or visit ([www.centerforcraft.org](http://www.centerforcraft.org)) for info on visiting hours and registration.

## Asheville Gallery of Art in Asheville, NC, Features Works by Elinor Bowman & Olga Michelson

The Asheville Gallery of Art in Asheville, NC, will present *Natural Beauty*, featuring works by Elinor Bowman, known for her watercolor figures, and Olga Michelson, known for soft, ethereal landscapes, on view from Sept. 1 - 30, 2020.

Gallery hours are, noon-5pm, Fridays and Saturdays. You can also make arrangements for a private tour by e-mailing a request to ([ashevillegalleryofart@gmail.com](mailto:ashevillegalleryofart@gmail.com)).

Though she has worked in other mediums, Elinor Bowman currently prefers to use watercolors or ink. She has painted models from life, and lately has enjoyed painting many subjects, from still life to animals. “I’ve had several teachers, in classes and privately, but currently two new granddaughters provide my inspiration.”

Bowman moved to Asheville in 2002, which gave her time to paint. Her work can be seen at Asheville Gallery of Art and at Trackside Studios in the River Arts District in Asheville. She is a member of



Work by Olga Michelson

the Swannanoa Valley Fine Arts League, and occasionally shows at the Red House in Black Mountain, NC.

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