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Smithsonian American Art Museum Acquires Tour-de-Force Glass Installation by Beth Lipman

The Smithsonian American Art Museum has acquired Beth Lipman's tour-de-force glass sculpture "Bancketje" (2003), currently on view at the museum's Renwick Gallery in the exhibition "From the Ground Up: Renwick Craft Invitational 2007." This is the first work by Lipman acquired by the museum.

"I am pleased that Beth Lipman's ambitious and stunning work enters the museum's collection on the 35th anniversary of its Renwick Gallery, thanks to the James Renwick Alliance which supports important acquisitions like this one," said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Lipman is renowned for her sculptural compositions, which re-interpret Renaissance and Baroque still-life paintings from Holland, Flanders and Italy, as well as from 18th- and 19th-century America, into blown and lampworked glass sculpture. She takes elements from these paintings—static composition, expressive light and opulent decoration—and translates the scenes into 3-D. Her objects, like those in the paintings, are chosen for their connotations. For example, overturned goblets and broken glass symbolize human frailty and mortality.

"Bancketje," a 20-foot-long oak table laden with 400 objects, was created during a nine-month period while Lipman was an artist-in-residence at the Creative Glass Center of America in Millville, N.J. Collaborating with 15 glass artists whom she invited to assist her, Lipman employed a variety of traditional and innovative techniques to create "Bancketje." By rendering the scene in transparent glass and skillfully blending the various components, She demands that the piece be seen as a whole, not an assemblage of individual objects.

"'Bancketje' powerfully captures Beth Lipman's vision and her skill in creating glass sculpture that defies categorization," said Jane Milosch, curator at the museum's Renwick Gallery and curator of the exhibition "From the Ground Up." "She blows, sculpts and arranges glass objects to create a

detailed and total installation effect. This tumultuous, super-sized feast engages the viewer on many levels, as these domestic glass objects cannot be taken in all at once.”

The work captures the visual sumptuousness and excess of a feast like the ones depicted in 17th-century Dutch still-life paintings called “bancketje.” During this era, the genre of still life was popular with the Dutch middle classes who were eager to display their wealth. Like these elaborate scenes, Lipman’s half-eaten morsels, overturned goblets and snuffed candles symbolically depict the transience of life. Her tableau is composed and chaotic; it both celebrates and mourns excess.

Lipman was born in Philadelphia in 1971. She earned a bachelor of fine arts degree from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in 1994. Lipman’s work has greatly benefited from several artist-in-residence programs, including programs at The Studio at the Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, N.Y.; the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wis.; and the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Wash. Since 2005 Lipman has served as the Arts/Industry coordinator of the artist-in-residence program at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center. In 2006, she received the UrbanGlass Award for New Talent.

“From the Ground Up: Renwick Craft Invitational 2007,” which also features the work of Paula Bartron, Jocelyn Châteauvert and Beth Cavener Stichter, is on view through July 22. The beautifully illustrated catalog is available for \$25 in the museum store and online at americanart.si.edu. After the exhibition closes, “Bancketje” will go on public display Aug. 4 in the permanent collection galleries at the Renwick Gallery.

About the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum is dedicated to exhibiting American crafts and decorative arts from the 19th to the 21st centuries. It is located on Pennsylvania Avenue at 17th Street N.W., near the Farragut North and Farragut West Metrorail stations. Museum hours are from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily, except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Recorded museum information: (202) 633-7970. Web site: americanart.si.edu.

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Note to editors: A high-resolution image of “Bancketje” may be downloaded from <ftp://saam-press@ftp.si.edu>. Call (202) 633-8530 for the password.