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Smithsonian American Art Museum Announces a Challenge Gift to Endow a Curator of Craft at its Renwick Gallery

The Smithsonian American Art Museum has announced the establishment of an endowment to support a curator of craft position at the museum's Renwick Gallery. An \$800,000 challenge gift from Lloyd Herman, who was the founding director of the Renwick Gallery, is the catalyst for attracting an additional \$1.2 million match from private contributors from across the United States.

"The excitement generated by Lloyd Herman's generous gift is reverberating around the museum and throughout the craft world," said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. "We are thrilled by this opportunity, which will allow us to continue to build the museum's craft program and to connect with patrons from across the country as we raise matching funds."

The Smithsonian Board of Regents approved the establishment of the endowment at its May 5 meeting. It is intended that the curatorial position will be named the Lloyd Herman Curator of Craft in honor of the lead donor.

"Though I haven't the wealth of many craft advocates and artists whose friendships I treasure from my 40-year association with the Renwick Gallery, even I can help," said Herman. "Whatever their means, I hope that artists, collectors and all others who treasure American creativity in glass, clay, wood, fibers and metals will help me establish a permanently endowed curatorial position for craft at the Smithsonian American Art Museum."

The Renwick Gallery, established as a branch of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 1972, features one of the finest collections of American craft in the United States. Its collections, exhibition program and publications highlight the best craft objects and decorative arts from the 19th century to the present. The museum's craft program currently includes one curator; the new position will provide a second curator for the program. Among its initiatives is a biennial exhibition series to honor the creativity and talent of craft artists working today, established in 2000. The Renwick Craft Invitational 2009 is scheduled to open Aug. 7, 2009.

Herman headed the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery from 1971 to 1986. He has been closely associated with the craft movement for more than three decades, lectured extensively throughout the world and served as a juror for competitions. He is an honorary fellow of the American Craft Council, and in 2007, he was honored with the Mint Museum of Craft + Design's Founders' Circle Award.

Individuals interested in supporting this initiative may contact Ross Randall, development officer for major gifts, at (202) 633-8393 or RandallR@si.edu.

About the Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with approximately 41,500 artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. Its main building, a National Historic Landmark and major example of Greek Revival architecture, is a dazzling showcase for American art and portraiture located at Eighth and F streets N.W. in the heart of a revitalized downtown arts district. It is open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. except Dec. 25.

The museum's branch for craft and decorative arts, the Renwick Gallery, is steps from the White House in the heart of historic federal Washington. Its Second Empire-style building, also a National Historic Landmark, was designed by architect James Renwick Jr. in 1859 and completed in 1874. Located at Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street N.W., it is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., except Dec. 25. Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Web site: americanart.si.edu.

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