



Office of Public Affairs

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**Media only:** Susan Kenney Battle (202) 275-1592  
Laura Baptiste (202) 275-1595

**Media Web site:** [www.americanart.si.edu/press](http://www.americanart.si.edu/press)

**Public only:** (202) 633-1000

## **Smithsonian American Art Museum Announces \$1.2 Million Donation from The Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation**

The Smithsonian American Art Museum announced a \$1.2 million gift from The Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation of Bethesda, Md., to establish The Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation Endowment. This endowment will support an ongoing biennial exhibition series showcasing contemporary craft artists, to be called the Renwick Craft Invitational, and related programs at the museum's Renwick Gallery.

"We are delighted to have Ryna and Melvin Cohen as friends of our wonderful American craft program. Their strong family foundation support strengthens the museum's exhibition program and will allow us to present many exciting artists' works here in the nation's capital," said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. "The Renwick Craft Invitationals are important as a national forum for crafts."

"Our family has been privileged to experience the Smithsonian's exhibitions and programs, and we are pleased to make this gift to express our thanks to the Smithsonian," said Melvin Cohen.

Melvin and Ryna Cohen are collectors of American art and contemporary craft and are members of the museum's Director's Circle. The Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation has a history of supporting many philanthropic organizations in Washington, D.C., and Maryland.

The biennial contemporary craft exhibition series at the Renwick Gallery was established in 2000 to honor the creativity and talent of craft artists working today. The first in the series, "The Renwick Invitational: Five Women in Craft," featured Myra Mimplitsch Gray, Mary Jackson, Janel Jacobson, Sondra Sherman and Consuelo Jiménez Underwood. "The Renwick Invitational: Four Discoveries in Craft" followed in 2002 and showcased the work of James Koehler, Gyöngy

Laky, Kristina Logan and Kim Rawdin. The next Renwick Craft Invitational will open in March 2007; Renwick Gallery curator Jane Milosch and two other craft experts will select the artists for this exhibition.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum collection began with gifts of art donated to the federal government in 1829 and has evolved into one of the world's most important American art holdings, with approximately 41,000 artworks in all media, spanning more than three centuries. The museum's National Historic Landmark building, currently under renovation, is located at Eighth and F Streets N.W. in the heart of a revitalized downtown arts district, above the Gallery Place Metrorail station (Red, Yellow and Green lines). When the building re-opens in July 2006, it will be a dazzling showcase for American art and portraiture that celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans.

The Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum is dedicated to exhibiting contemporary American crafts and decorative arts from the 19th to the 21st centuries. The Renwick is located on Pennsylvania Avenue at 17th Street N.W., near the Farragut North (Red line) and Farragut West (Blue and Orange lines) Metrorail stations. Museum hours are from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 357-1729 (TTY). Recorded information: (202) 275-1500.

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