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## **Four Contemporary Artists in the Spotlight at the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Renwick Craft Invitational 2007**

“From the Ground Up: Renwick Craft Invitational 2007” features the work of Paula Bartron, Jocelyn Châteauvert, Beth Lipman and Beth Cavener Stichter. The exhibition, on view at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum from March 9 through July 22, celebrates the creativity of four contemporary artists whose innovative approach to traditional craft media—clay, glass, fiber—make them figures to watch in American art.

“The Renwick Craft Invitationals are an important national forum for crafts,” said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. “We are delighted to showcase these four exceptional artists who are established in their respective craft fields and are worthy of greater attention.”

The artists, selected for their consistently outstanding work, were chosen by Susanne Frantz, independent curator and former curator of 20th-century glass at the Corning Museum of Glass in New York; Lloyd Herman, independent curator and founding director of the Renwick Gallery; and Jane Milosch, curator at the Renwick Gallery. Milosch is the curator of the exhibition.

“The thread that unites these four artists is their dedication to the physical characteristics of their chosen materials and the expressive range of their work, from minimalist-inspired sculpture to narrative still-life and figurative works to ornamental forms,” said Milosch. “Paula Bartron, Jocelyn Châteauvert, Beth Lipman and Beth Cavener Stichter all explore the inherent qualities of their chosen craft material with an eye toward its expressive potential.”

Craft artists’ work is rooted in their materials. Bartron, Châteauvert, Lipman and Stichter are all highly trained in their respective crafts. They use their skill and knowledge of traditional materials in new, expressive ways. This approach gives the work by these four artists its strong sensory impact.

Bartron, an American who resides in Stockholm, Sweden, creates blown and cast glass sculptures with an emphasis on minimal geometric forms and pure lines. Her works, such as “Red Cylinder” (2004), have rough encrusted surfaces that restrict the amount of light that can penetrate the exterior form; instead, her works appear to glow from within. A pioneer in the American studio glass movement that began 30 years ago, Bartron has exhibited her sculptures widely in Europe and Asia. “From the Ground Up” presents a rare opportunity to see her work in the United States.

Châteauvert, who lives and works in Charleston, S.C., makes handmade paper and combines it with silver to create sculptural jewelry, lighting designs and installations. The exhibition includes several of the artist’s room-size environments, which are made from translucent layers of paper, such as “Lily Clouds” (2006) that evokes the natural world. “Scratch” (2006), a new site-specific work, is the largest paper wall Châteauvert has installed to date.

Lipman, who resides in Sheboygan Falls, Wis., translates Renaissance and Baroque still-life paintings from Holland, Flanders and Italy, as well as from 18th- and 19th-century America, into 3-D blown and lampworked glass sculpture. Her tour-de-force, a 20-foot-long piece titled “Bancketje (Banquet)” (2003), depicts the excess and aftermath of a feast like the ones depicted in 17th-century Dutch paintings. By rendering the scene in transparent glass, Lipman demands that the piece be seen as a whole, not an assemblage of individual objects.

Stichter of Portage, Ohio, creates large clay sculptures of animals that take on human characteristics through their body language and physiognomy. Her metaphorical figures, described by Stichter as portraits of specific individuals or self-portraits, are depicted in provocative situations that lead to universal questions of human existence. “One Last Word” (2005) shows a hare, trapped yet defiant, seemingly pinned to the wall. “Olympia” (2006), a reclining female goat, evokes a mixture of innocence and seduction. Stichter uses the elastic and elemental quality of clay to articulate muscle, bone structure and sinew in her work, which enhances its visceral emotional impact.

The biennial 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, “Five Women in Craft,” featured Myra Mimplitsch Gray, Mary Jackson, Janel Jacobson, Sondra Sherman and Consuelo Jiménez Underwood. “Four Discoveries in Craft” followed in 2002 and showcased the work of James Koehler, Gyöngy Laky, Kristina Logan and Kim Rawdin.

## **Credit**

The Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation generously supports “From the Ground Up: Renwick Craft Invitational 2007.”

## **Publication**

The accompanying catalog includes essays by Milosch and Frantz, with an introduction by Herman. It will be available for \$25 in the museum store and online at [americanart.si.edu](http://americanart.si.edu).

## **Artists’ Roundtable**

On Friday, March 30 from noon to 1:30 p.m., the four artists featured in “From the Ground Up: Renwick Craft Invitational 2007” discuss their work and the significance of material and technique. A panel discussion, moderated by Milosch and Frantz, follows the overview presentation. This program, the Smithsonian Women’s Committee Lecture on American Craft, will be held in the museum’s new McEvoy Auditorium at Eighth and F streets N.W.

Visit the museum’s online program calendar at [americanart.si.edu](http://americanart.si.edu) for a complete schedule of free public programs.

## **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 (Red line) and Farragut West (Blue and Orange lines) 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](http://americanart.si.edu).

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**Note to editors:** Selected high-resolution images for publicity only may be downloaded from <ftp://saam-press@ftp.si.edu>. Call (202) 633-8530 for the password. Additional information about the exhibition, including short biographies for the artists, is available in the museum’s online press room, <http://americanart.si.edu/press>.