



vessel

Embodiment, Autonomy, and Ornament in Wood
November 4, 2022 – February 12, 2023



One of the most fundamental forms in craft, the vessel has long been an essential tool for use as well as for understanding the universe and the afterlife.

With works by:

Humaira Abid

Michael Bauermeister

Miriam Carpenter

Vivian Chiu

Kyle Cottier

Alison Croney Moses

Frank E. Cummings III

Aaron Haba

Michelle Holzapfel

Dierra Jones

Maria van Kesteren

Markku Kosonen

Jack Larimore

Sylvie Rosenthal

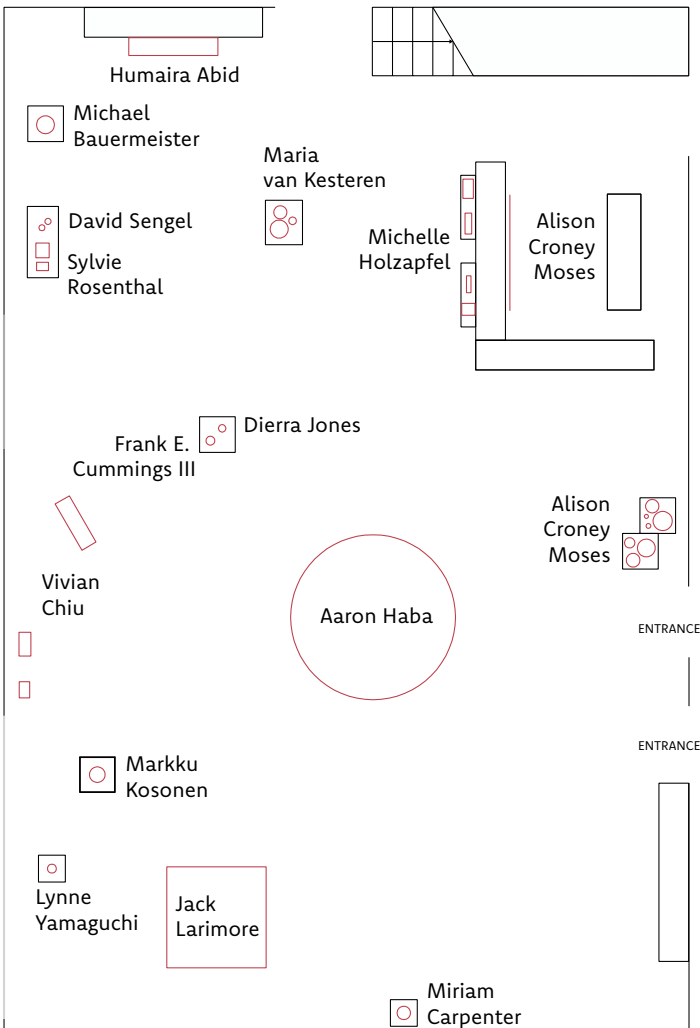
David Sengel

Lynne Yamaguchi

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Humaira Abid	5
Michael Bauermeister	7
Miriam Carpenter	8
Vivian Chiu	9
Kyle Cottier	11
Alison Croney Moses	12
Frank E. Cummings III	14
Aaron Haba	16
Michelle Holzapfel	17
Dierra Jones	19
Maria van Kesteren	21
Markku Kosonen	22
Jack Larimore	23
Sylvie Rosenthal	24
David Sengel	26
Lynne Yamaguchi	27



From bowls and spoons to crucibles and boats, vessels have facilitated human survival, industry, and legend. The vessel's role of containment also positions it as a metaphysical device that carries the soul, or as a metaphor for understanding autonomy, power, and agency over one's body.

Connecting to the Center for Art in Wood's origins as an advocate for woodturning in art, this exhibition examines the vessel as a source of inspiration for artists working in wood. How have they been informed not only by the material and the pleasing roundness of the turned form, but also questions of offering and ownership, or concealment and emptiness? For millennia, the idea of the vessel has been used to explain the secrets of the universe. This exhibition, which includes works from the Center's permanent collection as well as on loan, demonstrates the breadth of reflection, empowerment, subversion, and spiritual awareness inspired by the act of containment and the vessel form.

For millennia, the idea of the vessel has been used to

explain the secrets of the universe



Jack Larimore, *Sycamore Story*, 2021

Humaira Abid

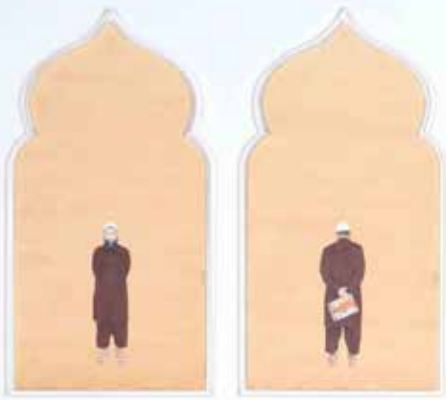
Humaira Abid's meticulously carved and turned wood sculpture and paintings—known for their exquisite detail—depict human relationships, societal repression, and the consequences of keeping basic truths from being discussed and shared. The seductive beauty and virtuosity of her work beckon closer viewing, revealing personal stories of joy, trauma, abuse, and survival.

In *Sacred Games II*, two arabesque windows reveal the figure of a cleric. In the left view, he stands facing the viewer but hides something behind his back. The window on the right shows him from the back and reveals his hidden contraband, an American pornographic magazine. Below, the faucets of the *sabil*—the public fountains situated outside mosques—are ready to cleanse and purify before entry into spaces of prayer. In this work, the vessel, which facilitates the purification ritual, is implicated in a system that permits hypocrisy and oppression.

Sacred Games II, 2020

Carved pine wood, pigments and tea wash
on handmade wasli paper

Courtesy of the artist



Humaira Abid, *Sacred Games II*, 2020

Michael Bauermeister

Michael Bauermeister uses woods native to Missouri, where he lives, and is careful not to waste the material. He salvages most of his wood from a local urban log recycling company, which he prefers over commercially grown stock. His sculptural work is focused on the vessel, which he uses as a material language for considering the human body as it relates to racism, bigotry, and social justice.

Hands on the Vessel occupies a scale approximating a human torso—a defining element of Classical sculpture. With its blunt imagery, the work comments on the current legal landscape in the United States as it targets women and marginalized people, aiming to restrict their rights and control their bodies.

Hands on the Vessel, 2022

Red oak

Courtesy of the artist

Miriam Carpenter

Miriam Carpenter's work is based on an intuitive but studious approach to each piece of wood she encounters, resulting in art and furniture that are deep meditations on the experience and history of each tree that enters her studio.

Bliss was created during Carpenter's participation in the Center for Art in Wood's 2014 Windgate International Turning Exchange residency. In her words: "[it] began as a calculated design which involved flipping a chunk of ash back and forth on the lathe to create an undulating form, and evolved into something that wasn't thought, but felt." Through a complicated process of carving, shaping, and finishing, the artist revealed a form that is simultaneously container and contained. Its surface ripples and undulates to form a drop in a bowl, or a continuous fluid shape, enunciated by the contour lines of the grain pattern.

Bliss, 2014 (ITE)
Ash, whitewash,
liming wax
H. 4 x Diam. 9 in.
The Center for Art
in Wood Museum
Collection, Donated
by the Artist
[OBJ 1044](#)



Vivian Chiu

Vivian Chiu was born in Los Angeles and immigrated to Hong Kong; she now works and lives in Richmond, VA. With an aptitude for problem solving and a sensitivity towards materials, Chiu utilizes continuous deconstruction and reconstruction to create optical sculptures and explore ideas of visibility and perception.

In the “Fractured Body” series of self-portraits, Chiu reduces the viscera of the body into flat, mathematically calculated crosscuts, then assembles the layers into scale models of her head and chest cavities. Peering inside, we are invited to investigate the interior spaces of the most personal of vessels, the self.

From the “Fractured Body” series, 2018–19
Birch plywood, laser print, aluminum
Courtesy of the artist

Self-Portrait I

H. 10 x W. 7 x D. 11 in.

Self-Portrait III

H. 10.5 x W. 16 x 8 in.

Self-Portrait IV

H. 65 x W. 11 x D. 36 in



Vivian Chiu, Self-Portrait IV,
from the "Fractured Body" series, 2018-19

Kyle Cottier

Kyle Cottier is an interdisciplinary artist who blends traditional textile and woodworking techniques with sculpture, drawing, and performance. His work is informed by the convergence of the natural and human-made worlds, exploring the synthesis of personal and social transformations.

During a year living as a resident artist in the Smoky Mountains, Cottier was influenced by the craft-based makers who worked alongside him. He created a tower of baskets woven from hand-cut pieces of reclaimed wood while reminded of the forest fire, ignited by tourists, that had devastated this forest some years before. According to Cottier, the work is an expression of the “hollow monuments of trees that stand like vessels that have been emptied of their essence by waiting for something to contain.”

Empty Vessels Make the Loudest Sound, 2022

Wood, rope, ink

Courtesy of the artist

Alison Croney Moses

Alison Croney Moses is an artist, craftsperson, educator, art administrator, mother, and Black woman. Her sculpture work and community work seamlessly weave together her values and passions, demonstrating her dedication to spaces of learning, making, and sharing art, craft, and design. She is especially committed to cultivating creative places that are welcoming and nurturing of the diverse identities that these spaces are built from. She focuses on empowering youth and adults to use their knowledge, skills, and experiences to make positive change in the world around them.

What We Hold is the continuation of the artist's ongoing series of sculptural cedar vessels. In this work, five organic pod forms—descending in size but clearly “related”—have highly sanded, satiny exteriors and articulated end-grain patterns that read as faceted drawings. Their interiors, painted a bright blue reflective of the natural world and its beauty, reveal the rough and jagged coopered staves that enable the sensuous curves of the surface.



What We Hold, 2022

Cedar and milk paint

Dimensions vary, H. 12–2.5 x Diam. 15– 4 in.

Courtesy of the artist

*To be filled with life is to step into the crosswalk
of being seen and unseen, of life and death,
of losing our laughter to ensure survival and wellness.
Within and beyond this body, our joy, wellness,
and black body, whole, becomes a revolution*

—Bintu Conté

Brought together by Alison [Croney Moses], a group of Boston-based Black mothers connected to develop a trusting, empowering community centered around the journey of Black Motherhood. In June of 2021, Bintu Conté—one of the mothers and an embodiment practitioner—guided the group in creating a sacred space to process lived experiences and cultivate a practice for sustaining physical, emotional, and collective self-care. This video is an excerpt of their weekend retreat at the Loring Greenough House in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston, MA.

Alison Croney Moses (US) with
Bintu Conté (Maninkan and US)

[*We Are Black Vessels*](#), 2021

Video, 4:18 mins

Produced by One Productions

Music: Euphoria Instrumental and Summer

Instrumental by Naz Alakai

Courtesy of the artists

Frank E. Cummings

Frank Cummings is a renowned mixed-media woodturner and fine-furniture maker who is known for threading and embedding stone, fine metals, bone, and other unconventional materials in his intricately carved fretwork. Though his approach focused on a profound appreciation for wood, critique of his work has often been filtered by his Black identity and assumptions of influence from West African traditions. To that end, Cummings traveled to Ghana and subsequently showed his work throughout the African continent.

Nature in Transition exploits and reveres the beauty of the grain structure of a section of cork oak as well as a painstakingly carved lacy fretwork through the cambium level around the top. Cummings encircled the vessel with inset bands of ivory and gold, following ancient traditions that lavishly ornamented vessels as a way of expressing their importance and value.

Nature in Transition, 1989

Cork oak, 18-karat gold, exotic material

H. 6.25 x W. 5.5 x D. 6 in.

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection,
Donated by Dr. Irving Lipton

[OBJ 79](#)



Frank Cummings III, *Nature in Transition*, 1989,
[OBJ 79](#)

Aaron Haba

Working out of his studio on a forested island in the Pacific Northwest, Aaron Haba creates a wide range of sculptural pieces, including gallery installations and site-specific outdoor sculptures. Using the creative practice he learned early on with the tools and skills handed down from his ancestors, he brings to life art that explores suffering, longing, and the deep connection that runs through all living things.

Haba's work is his attempt to make sense of the universe. *Vessel* appears to be a humble wooden bowl, expanded to an astonishing scale. Made from Douglas fir timbers reclaimed from a demolished church, *Vessel* is Haba's paean to spiritual buildings and monuments. Visitors are invited to peer through gaps in its walls or gaze on it from above, but the object's size prevents it from being fully seen in one glance.

Vessel, 2014

Reclaimed church timbers, carbon, beeswax

Courtesy of the artist



Michelle Holzapfel

Michelle Holzapfel is a wood-based sculpture artist based in southern Vermont. Her work is influenced by her many years of research in ancient vessel and ceremonial object forms around the world. The artist does not consider herself a “vessel maker”; rather, she views her focus on vessels as a set of parameters that guide her ideas.

Holzapfel’s carving and turning work, which involves detailed carving tools, lathes, and chainsaws, is noted for its virtuosity in burl woods—knob-like growths caused by injury, fungi, or insect infestations attacking the tree.

Self-Portrait, 1987

Cherry burl, tung oil

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection,
Donated by Marina Kaiser

[OBJ 1236](#)

White Birch Burl Pilgrim Vase, 1986

White birch burl

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection,
Donated by Larry and Phyllis Sager

OBJ 1265

Greenman Vase #1, 1989

Red maple burl

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection,
Donated by Larry and Phyllis Sager

OBJ 1270

Fishes Vase #1, 1987

Cherry burl

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection

[OBJ 120](#)



Top: Michelle Holzapfel, *Self-Portrait*, 1987, [OBJ 1236](#)
Bottom: Michelle Holzapfel, *Fishes Vase #1*, 1987, [OBJ 120](#)

Dierra Jones

Dierra Jones is an artist, jewelry maker, and educator. In Jones's studio practice, storytelling and place are important considerations. She imbues each object with her own emotions and identity to effect a transference of subjective experience between the artist and the viewer.

As part of the Center's exhibition *Wood + Body: Expressions of Contemporary Jewelry* in 2021, Jones was commissioned to create a [performative work](#) that would engage the public using a piece of her jewelry. *Connection* circulates around a gilded wood and ceramic ring that contains porcelain discs. Worn as a vessel on the artist's outstretched hand, *Connection* is a conduit for conversations and exchange. As the artist moves from one encounter to the next, a porcelain piece is gifted to the participant as a reminder of the time, place, and experience of connecting.

Connection, 2021

Concrete, wood, ceramic, gold leaf,
pigment, plaster, copper

Courtesy of the artist





Dierra Jones, *Connection*, 2021

Maria van Kesteren

Maria van Kesteren (1933–2020) is regarded as one of the first prominent female woodturners. Her unadorned, carefully proportioned bowl and box forms display Modernist concerns with shape and geometry, but their rigidity is countered by the depth, softness, and texture of her chosen material.

Volume, Box, and Landscape are vessels that demonstrate the artist's formalist and Minimalist concerns as well as her attention to exterior surfaces in contrast to interior volumes. The monochromatic treatment asserts focus on the quiet, restrained lines and proportions of the objects.

Landscape, 1987

Elm, paint

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection,
Center Purchase

[OBJ 71](#)

Volume, 1987

Elm, paint

The Center for Art in Wood Museum
Collection, Center Purchase

[OBJ 69](#)

Box, 1987

Elm, paint

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection,
Center Purchase

[OBJ 70](#)

Markku Kosonen

Markku Kosonen (1945–2010) was a Finnish artist, teacher, and critic whose work was exhibited throughout Scandinavia, Scandinavia, the US, Italy, and Korea. His expressive willow basketry, based on ancient traditions, is an articulation of the artist’s rumination on objects and the “spiritual processing of material” that connects humanism to objects. Kosonen’s *Willow Basket* series demonstrates how a seemingly utilitarian object can be transformed in the artist’s hands into a creative and imaginative form.

Willow Basket X, 1994

Willow

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection,
Donated by the Markku Kosonen Family

[OBJ 1158](#)



Jack Larimore

Jack Larimore grew up in northeastern Michigan; now living on a farm in southern New Jersey, Larimore is a sculptor and furniture maker. He is known for making unique forms from hardwoods and found materials that are often clever or introspective. He will often include poetry and personal observations with the display of his work.

Sycamore Story beckons reflection, slow observation, and appreciation for the natural world. The interior vessel in the installation resembles a boat, which is a symbol for death and departure to the afterlife in many mythological traditions. The sycamore that encircles it was once rooted across from Larimore's home. Referred to as a "witness" by Larimore, is it a guardian over the artist's story, or an escort to another world?

Sycamore Story, 2021

Sycamore, cypress, pine tar, bronze

Courtesy of the artist

Sylvie Rosenthal

Sylvie Rosenthal learned fine woodworking and building at a young age. She now maintains a studio practice making furniture, production work, and sculpture dealing with hybridity, materiality, queer theory, injustice, and the natural world. She also dedicates time to teaching woodworking skills to children.

Skull Teapot is completely carved by hand. Rosenthal 3D-scanned the object, manipulated the digital file, and used a 7-axis CNC router to shape the *Artifact Teapot*. She then painstakingly carved, finished, and gilded the new teapot to create a duet that challenges the fetishization of hand-making and “authenticity” in craft.

Skull Teapot, 2014

Basswood, hand-carved; finish

Courtesy of the artist

Artifact Teapot, 2014

Basswood, gilding paste 3D scan of *Skull Teapot* doubled via 3D modeling

Courtesy of the artist



Sylvie Rosenthal, *Skull Teapot*, 2014

David Sengel

David Sengel was introduced to woodworking by his father, an amateur furniture maker. He recalls being enthralled by the transformation of the material from raw timbers to furniture objects in his father's shop. Though he studied music, he began teaching himself woodturning. Gradually, seeking out workshops with renowned woodturning artists, he gained the skills and confidence to consider how the technique would serve his conceptual vision.

Tea Cup and *Thorned Vessel* are appealing and delicate representations of traditional serving objects. However, they are adorned by thorns that not only ornament their surfaces, but also deter any attempts to hold or interact with them. The monochromatic black matte finish, a common element in Sengel's work, endows these objects with a sense of uncanny mystery and transports them into a narrative of the artist's making.

Thorned Vessel, 1993

Wood, paint, rose thorns, locust thorns

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection,

Donated by Bruce Kaiser

[OBJ 653](#)

Tea Cup, 1996

Pear, paint, thorns

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection,

Donated by the Artist

[OBJ 397](#)

Lynne Yamaguchi

Lynne Yamaguchi is a woodturner and artist who calls two places home: one in Kyoto, Japan, and the other in the Arizona desert. Both feed her work in wood, “through the wildness of the wood and the discipline of the art.” Simple and sensual, informed by Japanese culture, aesthetics, and touch-based practices like shiatsu, Yamaguchi’s work centers on form and substance, containment and expression, and the tension between lift and mass.

Learning to Cope: Pear Incognito under a Mantle of Cherry, 2007 (ITE)

Pear, cherry bark, waxed string

The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection,
Donated by the Artist

[OBJ 589](#)

