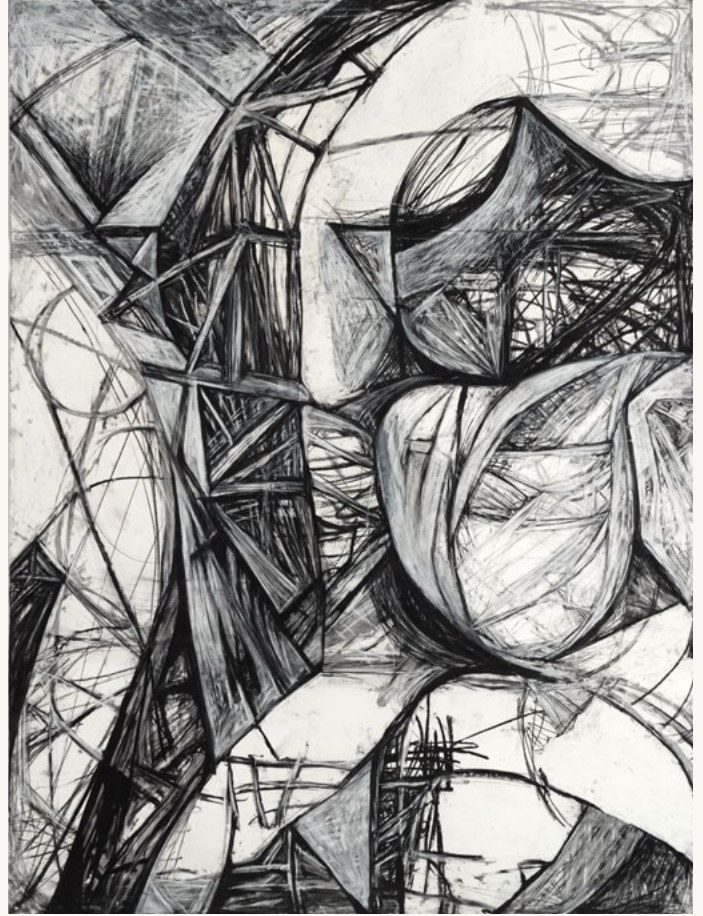


GUILD GALLERY



TARA GEER

UNSTILL WORLD



ROMAN AND WILLIAMS GUILD GALLERY
THREE TWO ONE CANAL ST, NEW YORK, NY 10013
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EXHIBITION ANNOUNCEMENT

TARA GEER
UNSTILL WORLD

Guild Gallery is pleased to present *Unstill World*, an exhibition spotlighting new and recent works by New York based artist Tara Geer in conversation with sculptural pieces by four Japanese fiber artists, including Nagakura Kenichi, Monden Yuichi, Yufu Shohaku, and Tanabe Chikuunsai. Ranging in medium from drawing to weaving, the dynamic works in this exhibition each capture the essence of the *qi*—a term used in traditional Chinese culture to refer to the energy that pulses through all living beings. The interplay of line and form between these artists' works from Geer's unraveling drawings to the twisting and binding linework present in the sculptural fiber works reveal a power not typically associated with these practices. These artists turn to simple, ubiquitous materials from charcoal to bamboo to create something beautiful that brims with new life, in turn creating a new dialogue around these often underrecognized mediums. As E. B. White wrote, "Before the seed there comes the thought of bloom."

Foregrounding the exhibition are a series of large-scale charcoal drawings by Geer, whose works can be found in numerous museum collections across the country, including the Morgan Library & Museum, the Parrish Museum, and the William Louis Dreyfus Foundation, among others. A prolific artist, Geer has worked ceaselessly for the past 25 years in her West Harlem studio creating unspooling monochromatic abstractions that have a sculptural quality to them. For Geer, drawing is not a means to an end, but rather it's her way of thinking and feeling through the world. As Geer states: "Drawings carry motion. They have a quality of being in the middle of doing. Even when finished and framed, drawings balance within the process of becoming. Alive enough not to be done. Delicate puffs of air and gale force winds rising." After graduating with an MFA from Columbia University, where she has been teaching art for the past decade, Geer's practice has evolved from one of observation and representation to one that is purely intuitive. Like a jazz pianist who becomes entranced by the music, Geer becomes fully immersed in her drawing process, attempting to catch a transient feeling that moves from the artist's arm and brush, through the paper, and back into the world.

TARA GEER in her studio in West Harlem, New York.



Geer's idea for the work in this show emerged upon her return to New York City after the pandemic when she encountered what she calls a strange blooming—something that grows from nothing, from sheer will. This unsettling humming through the city captivated Geer, who began trying to reflect these feelings onto her drawings. As Geer states, "Drawing teaches me to look at these things that don't make sense, to linger on those things that I don't have words for...to wait to just feel something before I jump to recognize it." The strange blooming started at the bottom of the page, growing from that no ground. Then, by spring, they started lifting up from the bottom of the page, unfurling like milkweed pods or something propagating in the air. Geer's works in this exhibition challenge our preconceived notions of the recognizable and what it means to really look at something. Following Geer's exhibition at Guild Gallery, she will have a solo exhibition at Duck Creek Art Center in East Hampton this summer.

COVER: 'REVERSE', 2018, 10"W X 6.7"H, PASTEL, CHALK, PENCIL, PAPER



GUILD GALLERY

EXHIBITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Like Geer, who creates three-dimensional drawings using charcoal and pencil on paper, the Japanese fiber artists in this exhibition use often discarded or dead natural materials, consisting primarily of bamboo, to make intricate works that honor an ancient craft that has been practiced for thousands of years. Using a range of bamboo from tiger to madake and shinodake, these artists' work demonstrates the expressive qualities of this unique and demanding material of which mastery is a lifelong process. When viewed together, Geer and these artists' works are harbingers of spring, reminding us of the perseverance and awe of nature's ever-changing life cycle.

This exhibition is presented in collaboration with TAI Modern gallery.

Unstill World

April 20th - May 27th

Tuesday - Sunday 10AM - 6PM

All other times by Appointment only



Charcoal, pastel, chalk, and pencil are Geer's primary materials.

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'WATERLOGGED', 2023, 38" X 49", CHARCOAL, PASTEL, CHALK, PENCIL, PAPER.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

TARA GEER
B. 1970, BOSTON,
MASSACHUSETTS

Tara Geer (b. 1970, Boston, Massachusetts) is a New York-based artist whose primary medium is drawing. For Geer, drawing is not an intermediary process, but rather the seed of all making—raw beginning. Influenced by disparate artistic styles from traditional Chinese landscape painting and early Japanese calligraphy to Mexican retablos, Geer is interested in a kind of seeing—not of a world of known, knowable, sure things—but of a world brimming with information beyond her ability to hold down. Using mostly charcoal, pencil, and eraser on paper, Geer creates monumental abstract drawings that feel as though they are in a constant state of change.

Geer holds a BA and MFA from Columbia University where she had a full teaching fellowship and graduated Magna Cum Laude. Geer's works are held in several major public collections, including the Morgan Library & Museum, the Parrish Museum, and the William Louis Dreyfus Foundation, among others. Her work with the 6-woman activist collective, Victory Garden, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The New York Historical Society, The Beinecke Library at Yale University, and The Canadian Museum. She's had solo shows in Los Angeles and in New York, and exhibited at Jason McCoy, Tibor de Nagy, and Glenn Horowitz Gallery, among other galleries. Geer's work is featured in two books: "Carrying Silence: The Drawings of Tara Geer" and "New York Studio Conversations." In addition to being an artist, Geer has been teaching art for the past three decades. She currently teaches in the Art and Art Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she has been on staff since 2012.



Geer with her drawings in her studio.



'SMALL CAVERNS,' 2023, 24" X 34", CHARCOAL, PASTEL, CHALK, PAPER.



GEER WORKS TO "CATCH THE FORCE OF ALIVENESS AS IT MOVES" IN HER DRAWINGS.



THE WALLS OF GEER'S STUDIO ARE FILLED WITH HER DRAWINGS AND EXCERPTS FROM ANCIENT TEXTS.



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CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION	1997	COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, MFA	NEW YORK, NY
	1993	COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, BFA, MAGNA CUM LAUDE, PHI BETA KAPPA	NEW YORK, NY
TEACHING	2012-2023	INSTRUCTOR OF DRAWING, TEACHERS COLLEGE IN THE ART AND ART EDUCATION PROGRAM, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY	
	1997-2023	EDUCATOR FOR VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES, HUMANITIES IN MEDICINE PROGRAM, YALE UNIVERSITY, THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM, THE BRONX CHARTER SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS, EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO NY, ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, THE JOAN MITCHELL FOUNDATION, JOHN ASHBERRY'S POETRY SCHOOL, HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S W.E.B. DU BOIS INSTITUTE AMONG MANY OTHERS INCLUDING TEACHER TRAINING IN NY, MA, AND CT PUBLIC SCHOOLS	
	1994-1998	ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ART, DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ARTS, COLUMBIA COLLEGE	
SOLO EXHIBITIONS	2024	[FORTHCOMING] THE BRATTLEBORO ART MUSEUM	BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT
	2023	[FORTHCOMING] THE ARTS CENTER AT DUCK CREEK	EAST HAMPTON, NY
	2023	UNSTILL WORLD, GUILD GALLERY	NEW YORK, NY
	2022	STRANGELY BLOOMING, PLANTHOUSE GALLERY	NEW YORK, NY
	2021	WHEN THE SCAFFOLDING STARTS TO CRUMBLE, JASON MCCOY GALLERY	NEW YORK, NY
	2019-2020	DRAWING INVITATIONAL, THE NATIONAL ARTS CLUB	NEW YORK, NY
	2018	OUTSIDE THE LINES, THE NATIONAL ARTS CLUB	NEW YORK, NY
	2017	TARA GEER: DRAWING-PRINTS MONOTYPES, RUSSELL JANIS	BROOKLYN, NY
	2013	CARRYING SILENCE, GLENN HOROWITZ GALLERY	EAST HAMPTON, NY
	2013	WHEN WE ARE AT SEA IN THE EVIDENCE, ARAN CRAVEY GALLERY	LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
NOTABLE GROUP EXHIBITIONS	2021-2022	SELECTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DRAWINGS AND PRINTS: REVOLUTION, RESISTANCE AND ACTIVIS THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART	NEW YORK, NY
	2018	THE ART OF COLLABORATION, THE YALE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY	NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT
	2017	IN CONVERSATION, INDIANA UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR ART & DESIGN	INDIANA



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CURRICULUM VITAE

NOTABLE GROUP EXHIBITIONS	2016	BLACK & WHITE: MODERN & CONTEMPORARY POSITIONS JASON	NEW YORK, NY
	2015	EMBRACING MODERNISM: 10 YEARS OF DRAWINGS ACQUISITIONS, MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM	NEW YORK, NY
	2014-2015	SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL, FLOWERS GALLERY	NEW YORK, NY AND LONDON, UK
	2012	BRING YOUR OWN PENCIL, STEVEN HARVEY FINE ARTS	NEW YORK, NY
	2011-2012	DRAWING THE MIND: THE EMERGENCE OF COMPLEXITY, OSILAS GALLERY	NEW YORK, NY
	2011	THINKING THROUGH DRAWING, MACY GALLERY	NEW YORK, NY
	2010	CURRENT DRAWING, TIBOR DE NAGY	NEW YORK, NY
PUBLIC COLLECTIONS		THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART	NEW YORK, NY
		THE CANADIAN MUSEUM	TORONTO, CANADA
		PARRISH ART MUSEUM	WATER MILL, NY
		MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM	NEW YORK, NY
PUBLICATIONS	2016	"NEW YORK STUDIO CONVERSATIONS: 15 WOMEN TALK ABOUT ART" BY STEPHANIE BUHMANN, THE GREEN BOX, BERLIN, TRANSLATED AND DISTRIBUTED INTERNATIONALLY	
	2013	"CARRYING SILENCE: THE DRAWINGS OF TARA GEER," ESSAYS BY RACHEL COHEN & ANDRÉ GREGORY, PUBLISHED BY GLENN HOROWITZ BOOKSELLER, NEW YORK, NY	



GUILD GALLERY



THE LEFT PANEL OF GEER'S TRIPTYCH 'WIND RISING,' 2022, EACH PANEL IS 75"X 60", CHARCOAL, PASTEL, CHALK, PAPER.

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GUILD GALLERY

ARTIST STATEMENT

WORDS BY
TARA GEER

I have always drawn— it is my primary medium. Drawing is my way to feel an unstill world. I stand in my darkening studio in West Harlem and try to touch something outside of language. A kind of groping through an unruly, persistent sensation. I draw and feel wilderness just off the ground.

Chinese painting manuals and critics dating back to the 6th century, urge artists to find the inner life force in what they draw. Not just to describe the thing's appearance, space, and light with accuracy, but to catch the force of aliveness as it moves—the qi. Energy from the world moves down the artist's arm and brush, through the paper, and back into the world. Once you make a mark, you are in play— balancing light and darkness, empty and full, spontaneous and permanent— sloshing forward.

I want to draw this aliveness. This feeling of the world plowing, sliding, breathing, restless. Down my arms, through the lines, and out.

Drawings carry motion. They have a quality of being in the middle of doing. Even when finished and framed, drawings balance within the process of becoming. Alive enough not to be done. Delicate puffs of air and gale force winds rising.

I used to draw by observation, but for maybe a decade now, I am drawing something neither invented inside my imagination nor found whole outside of my head. Sort of like how, at the end of a day spent outside—in a foreign city, or at a yard sale, or in a garden of succulents—you close your eyes, and your vision seems to rush and stutter, crazily unspooling a film of the day's mismatched parts, on and on, into dreaming.

This unspooling night field is the closest I get to describing the content of my work. Parts unseal themselves from their objects and ride into the drawings as if on horseback. The more I draw, the more the drawing clamors at me. I have to draw towards the bits I can make out before they disappear. Tracks of barely visible lines, thick, tangling blackness, booming pressure. I am not sure what I am drawing. But I feel I can't draw fast enough to get the lines all down.



A Geer drawing in process.

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'CAPITOL', 2023, 38" X 49", CHARCOAL, PASTEL, CHALK, PENCIL, PAPER.

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GEER STANDS IN FRONT OF THE CENTER AND RIGHT PANELS OF HER TRIPTYCH 'WIND RISING,' 2022. EACH PANEL IS 75"X 60", CHARCOAL, PASTEL, CHALK, PAPER.



ERASED LINES IN GEER'S DRAWINGS OFTEN CREATE A SENSE OF MOTION.



"IT'S LIKE DRAWING TEACHES LOOKING, RATHER THAN THE OTHER WAY AROUND," SAYS GEER.



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'EL JALEO', 2021, 38" X 49", CHARCOAL, PASTEL, CHALK, PENCIL, PAPER.



'HOVERING BACH', 2021, 38" X 49", CHARCOAL, PASTEL, CHALK, PENCIL, PAPER.



'LITTLE HUMBACK', 2021, 38" X 49", CHARCOAL, PASTEL, CHALK, PENCIL, PAPER.



'FIRST BLOOMING', 2021, 38" X 49", CHARCOAL, PASTEL, CHALK, PENCIL, PAPER.



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INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST TARA GEER

BY
MACKENZIE WAGONER

On a blisteringly cold winter afternoon, artist Tara Geer is in her West Harlem studio, where she has been drawing since the late '90s. Many artists have come and gone in the neighboring studios—Geer is the only remaining tenant of the original group. The seeming stillness betrays her prolific drawing practice. For decades, Geer has worked intently through the hours to capture the life force humming around her in charcoal, keenly watching the world move, channeling its energy onto paper.

The walls of the studio climb with swirling, sprouting drawings that seem to pulse. Quotes are painted in ink from Kabir (“If you know you’re alive,/ find the essence of life”) and Mary Oliver (“I don’t know exactly what prayer is./ I do know how to pay attention...”), underscoring Geer’s intentions. The monochromatic abstractions are quietly—sometimes furiously—alive; an unruly result that requires patience, acute awareness, and a near unconscious religious ecstasy to get down on the page. We sat down to speak about her latest body of work, the futility of drawing from observation, and the vital importance of looking—while the light changed across the Hudson and her block came rollickingly to life.

MACKENZIE WAGONER: TELL ME ABOUT HOW THE WORK IN THIS SHOW STARTED. WHAT WERE YOU THINKING ABOUT?

Tara Geer: We’d been living in the woods for a year, [and when we came back to the city], I could feel things growing here, but there’s no dirt, there’s no lawn, there’s no nutrients. There’s toxins and soot, yet you feel this sort of pulse of things strangely blooming—this aliveness. The plastic bags, cement, and ugly buildings are pulsing with life. You feel humming.

MW: And that’s a different kind of life, a kind of beauty to you.

TG: When you look at something long enough, and are careful enough in how you observe it, it will show you what’s beautiful about it, no matter what it is. I’m interested in a kind of beauty that has all the ugliness showing through. The original idea for the work in this show was this strange blooming—something that grows from nothing, from sheer will or something.

MW: The first works in this show, which you began making in 2020 are more self-contained and more root-like than the later work. Talk to me about that evolution.

TG: When I first returned home to [New York], the strange blooming started at the bottom of the page, growing from that no ground. Then, by spring, they started lifting up from the bottom of the page, unfurling like milkweed pods or something propagating in the air. Some of them got very spacious or cloudy. They were unspooling and unraveling in an unruly way.

MW: The more recent work has much more density. How did you arrive there?

TG: They started as airborne delicate things, and then recently some became more and more elaborate, overly drawn and overly detailed. I would sort of attack them with black and cover them up, and they became these kind of monsters built inside of featherweight obsessive stuff.



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TG: I don't quite understand what they are now, but I know that they ate up all the delicate drawings inside.

MW: When you begin a piece, do you already know the direction in which you will take it?

TG: A lot of people talk about their artwork like they're in complete control, like a military leader planning a campaign for war. But when I have full control over [my work], it feels dead.

MW: How long have you been working this way?

TG: I was always a drawer. I drew as a kid, drew at the restaurant, drew through my classes, just drew. Drawing photorealistic recognizable things was the first goal I had. But the more I drew, the more I looked. And the more I looked, the more I didn't know what I was looking at. It's pretty interesting to look at things and not know what they are. You almost can't hold onto that. It just immediately

I WANT TO FIND A WAY TO HONOR THE STRANGENESS OF WHAT YOU SEE IF YOU REALLY, REALLY LOOK. BEING IN THE WORLD OF LOOKING AND DRAWING, NOT EXPLAINING, NOT KNOWING WHAT IT IS, NOT NAMING IT, IS KIND OF THE THING I GUESS I AM REACHING OUT TO DO.

This past year I've been interested in how much motion I can get into a piece of paper. No artwork should have any kind of motion in it. A piece of paper, or a piece of wood literally has no motion. It's still. And to even pretend to be describing motion is just so weird and interesting and so magical.

MW: You have gone from drawing details from the skin of objects, like folds in materials to what you described as the life beneath the skin, you wrote that it was like a mountain range beneath a threadbare sheet. Is this work taking us another layer down to look at something deeper?

TG: I never thought about it exactly like that, but that's probably what it is. I used to always draw from life. I was intently drawing the folds in my backpack, the stains on my floor, little things I made, and then at some point, maybe a decade ago, I stopped. I'm still grabbing details from the world, I'm still observing the world, but they're combining in their own way with a mind of their own. It's unruly, and I appreciate it's unruliness. I do whatever I can to allow them to be unruly.

resolves into, "Oh, that's just the garbage can." I want to hold onto the looking before knowing anything. I want to find a way to honor the strangeness of what you see if you really, really look. Being in the world of looking and drawing, not explaining, not knowing what it is, not naming it, is kind of the thing I guess I am reaching out to do. Drawing teaches me to look at these things that don't make sense, to linger on those things that I don't have words for...to wait to just feel something before I jump to recognize it. It's like drawing teaches looking, rather than the other way around.

MW: It's like Einstein saying, "The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know."

TG: We have all this completely ungrounded certainty. You glance around like you know what you're looking at, you know where you are, you know who those people are, and none of it's true. It's this fictional confidence we have. When you spend time looking at something, you can look at something that's tiny for hours and still not know it or be certain about it. Or you have it down and then the light changes. It's just so improbable to be able to actually see something.



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MW: So life drawing in the traditional sense is in a way, impossible or inaccurate.

TG: Drawing from observation is this completely fruitless endeavor. It's Sisyphean. When you look out at the world, you're looking at something that's gone a second later. We believe things are fixed or stable, and they're just not. When we know things are about to pass, we feel precious about them, love them, and care about them, but we don't see the whole world around us as being something about to pass. You just can't experience things that intensely for very long. You have to go back to believing the world is stable. It's just a matter of being able to have those moments, where you can recognize how precious and fragile and temporary it all is. We don't honor things that are temporary—being important or being remembered is about making things that never go away. But why not honor temporary things? Our whole lives are composed of temporary things.

MW: Speaking of temporality, talk to me about erasure. You intentionally add charcoal and lines to your work, but do you erase purposefully?

TG: Oh yeah. I would say my drawings are sometimes almost fifty percent erasure. I'll go through a big eraser a day. It used to be that I'd erase when I made a mistake, but I found that kind of limiting. You can erase because you want to erase, not just chasing an error. So now, I will often draw lines that I want to erase. The erased lines make these kind of ghosts that I really love, and that often actually gives some of the motion. In [the first blooming drawings], I thought of the erased lines here [at the top] as what the growing thing was dreaming. To grow, you have to first dream of growing. E. B. White wrote, "Before the seed there comes the thought of bloom."

MW: Outside of drawing, you do a lot of activist work, including founding Action Potluck, Sanctuary Neighborhoods, that are rooted in nourishment. Does your drawing connect to that impulse to nourish?

TG: The magic of drawing is that you take nothing, basically—plain simple things like paper and charcoal—and then you make something out of it, using your hands to transform them into something that feels alive. Those little acts of creation, where you can go from nothing to something, make the world feel more nourishing. Regardless of whether you live in an ugly place or a beautiful place, you can make it grow into something that nourishes you. If we all did more of that, we'd all be a little happier.



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ABOUT GUILD GALLERY

Located on Canal Street, the vibrant, propulsive stretch of New York City's rising art scene, Guild Gallery celebrates the making of art objects by contemporary masters, drawing upon the millennia-long history of the decorative arts.

Guild Gallery is the natural extension of Roman and Williams Guild, on the corner of Howard and Mercer Streets. When we opened the doors of the Guild it was the realization of a decades-long dream: to create a living organism of people, objects and furnishings—an eclectic world, a modern-day guild of the senses.

We designed the Guild as a place to showcase the furniture that we make alongside the work of artisans we most admire for their skill and dedication to technique. We wanted to emphasize the everyday functionality of remarkably formed items and the significance of living with very beautiful things while valuing the utility of expert crafted pieces.

Guild Gallery is the next stage of evolution in this dialogue. We build on our commitment to help people appreciate the artistry as we celebrate individual makers. While the Guild celebrates a beauty that derives from function, the Gallery focuses purely on form. Whereas the Guild is all about an eclectic mix, the Gallery will spotlight the object, artist, and process.

We want to introduce you to artists who are working today, so that you can follow their trajectories and understand their work as an ongoing, organic narrative. We represent a group of ten remarkable artists, makers of extraordinary art objects, furniture—sculptors and other creators whose medium might be ceramic, glass or wood.

The Guild was founded on the principle that art and craft are not mutually exclusive entities. The contemporary works that we show at the Gallery experiment with line, form, and material, fusing the ancient and the modern through traditional techniques and references to a millennia-old lineage. These are living pieces, made by living artists.

They are living pieces, not just because you can—should—live with them, but also because they are made with materials that feel alive, like wood from trees or gloriously malleable clay. This is a guiding principle of everything we do in our own design practice and, by extension, at Guild Gallery.

These are pieces that are meant to be communed with, in our homes. So while key pieces by an individual artist are displayed at the Canal Street Guild Gallery to be appreciated as works of art in their own right, others will be seen at the Guild on Howard and Mercer, just a stone's throw away, interacting with other objects and furnishings, as it might in a home. Thus we hope to foster connoisseurship and demonstrate how they might be lived with.

The Gallery is a venue designed to support the rigor and discipline of the artists as they fashion their materials, to honor the human scale of their works. To that end, we designed the wooden pedestals on which we display the works; the Gallery emphasizes warmth, purity and focus. We invite you to explore Guild Gallery, to ponder the power of exchange across civilizations, countries and techniques. And investigate these objects that contain profound stories about nature, culture, craft and art.

— *ROBIN STANDEFER and STEPHEN ALESCH*

