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Smithsonian American Art Museum Announces Bresler Endowment to Support Curator Position at its Renwick Gallery

The Smithsonian American Art Museum has received a gift from noted craft collector and local arts patron Fleur Bresler to create an endowment to support the current curator of craft position at the museum.

“Fleur Bresler exemplifies the meaning of philanthropy, supporting our craft program through her myriad contributions of time, expertise and resources,” said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. “We are honored to commemorate her and her late husband Charles’s contributions to the Renwick Gallery through this gift.”

“The creativity that has filled my life as a Renwick Gallery docent has been deeply satisfying,” said Bresler. “The excellent shows produced and displayed at the Renwick educate the public and fulfill the artists’ desire to benefit generations of viewers. I believe it is important to see these inspiring projects continue.”

Fleur and Charles Bresler assembled one of the leading collections of American craft with an emphasis on textiles and objects of turned wood. The 2010 Renwick Gallery exhibition “A Revolution in Wood: The Bresler Collection” celebrated their gift of 66 pieces of turned and carved wood to the museum. The Breslers’ gift, one of the largest of wood art to any American museum, established the Renwick Gallery as one of the preeminent public collections of wood art in the United States.

The Smithsonian Board of Regents approved the establishment of the Bresler Endowment in April 2011. Nicholas R. Bell, the current curator at the Renwick Gallery, will hold the title The Fleur and Charles Bresler Curator of American Craft and Decorative Art.

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, exhibitions program and publications highlight the best craft objects and decorative art from the 19th century to the present. In honor of the 40th anniversary of the Renwick Gallery, Bell is organizing an exhibition titled “40 under 40: Craft Futures,” which opens July 20, 2012. It features 40 artists born

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since 1972, and investigates evolving notions of craft within traditional media such as ceramics and metalwork, as well as in fields as varied as sculpture, industrial design, installation art, fashion design, sustainable manufacturing and mathematics.

A native of Washington, D.C., Bresler has served as a docent at the Renwick Gallery for 14 years and has been a presenter in multiple museum programs. In 2011, she was named as a Commissioner of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. She has also served on numerous non-profit boards related to craft, including the James Renwick Alliance, the American Craft Council and the Woodturning Center in Philadelphia. Together with her husband, she helped fund and build VisArts, a multifaceted visual arts center in Rockville, Md.

The Bresler Endowment follows another successful museum initiative to invigorate its craft program. In March 2011, the museum announced it had met the challenge posed by Lloyd Herman, the founding director of its Renwick Gallery, to create an endowment to support a second curator of craft position. The Breslers were also major contributors to this effort.

About the Smithsonian American Art Museum and its Renwick Gallery

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. Its main building, a National Historic Landmark and major example of Greek Revival architecture, is 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. The museum's branch for contemporary 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 on Pennsylvania Avenue at 17th Street N.W., it is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Follow the museum on Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, ArtBabble, iTunes and YouTube. Website: americanart.si.edu.

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