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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Explore the role of creativity and change with Pittsburgh Cultural Producers

An Inspiring Evening with the Stories and People of Pittsburgh

PITTSBURGH, PA – January 19, 2018 – Gentrification is a complex and current issue that affects communities and social capital on a historical and cultural level. In conjunction with Contemporary Craft's (CC) social justice art exhibition - *Shelter: Crafting a Safe Home*, two local creatives – Aaron Regal and Justin Strong will participate in a free salon-style discussion on Thursday, February 8, 2018 at 6 PM. The continuous series, *The Space Between* brings activist and photographer Aaron Regal and entrepreneur Justin Strong, former proprietor of East Liberty Shadow Lounge in an evening of inspiring and informative discussion. This February event will focus on building a stronger community through art and examines the need for safe and secure housing for all.

During the event, featured speakers will talk about their backgrounds, the way they approach their work creatively, and how they create a vibrant community through art. The speakers will also share reflections on their personal journeys and on CC's current exhibition. This event is free and open to the public at CC's Strip District gallery; attendees are invited to arrive early to experience the exhibition before the event. RSVP for the event is encouraged on CC's website at: <http://contemporarycraft.org/event/the-space-between-2018-02-08/>

Shelter: Crafting a Safe is a thought-provoking exhibition that explores the pressing public issues of human displacement and housing insecurity through the lens of craft. It encourages people to start a conversation on the topics of displacement and the universally identified human need for shelter. Featuring 14 artists from the US and abroad, the exhibition examines timely topics through artworks that convey personal stories and experiences to demonstrate the local and worldwide impact insecure housing has on individuals and society. The exhibition will be on view through February 17, 2018.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Justin Strong is a Pittsburgh native and business owner who believes the most important component of a strong neighborhood is an economy that embraces local businesses and entrepreneurs, not big box development. His businesses throughout Pittsburgh have assisted in bringing positive growth to many communities. Strong began his business career in 1997 by developing 7th Movement Development, LLC, an economic development firm for creatives in Pittsburgh. Later, he opened the Shadow Lounge, a performance venue and lounge in East Liberty that hosted local celebrities, including rappers Mac Miller, Kellee Maize, and Real Deal. After closing the Shadow Lounge in 2014, Strong became the fourth-generation owner of Strong Fabric Care, LLC, a family business that started in North Carolina in 1930, moved to Pittsburgh in 1945, and has remained one of the few black-owned dry cleaning companies in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

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The Space Between, 2

Aaron Regal is an interdisciplinary artist native to Pittsburgh, PA. He works across a range of mediums, predominantly in painting, printmaking, photography, and occasionally in sculpture and digital media. Through his artwork, he approaches the absurdity of the modern human condition and themes of social/economic justice, political turmoil, climate change, consumerism, global computerization, and various other collective societal conditions in flux. Regal's work, *CLEARANCE*, is an ongoing photo essay since 2011 that investigates the business quarter of East Liberty and its surrounding neighborhoods, an area that has gone through several dramatic cultural and economic shifts throughout its 200-year history. The images in *CLEARANCE* provide a window into what gentrification, geographic segregation, and aggressive corporate capitalism look like.

FUNDERS

The Space Between is sponsored by Cohen & Grigsby, P.C. *Shelter: Crafting a Safe Home* is made possible by the Mary Hillman Jennings Foundation, The Pittsburgh Foundation, Staunton Farm Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, The Fine Foundation, the Brooks Foundation through the PNC Charitable Trusts Grant Review Committee, and Cohen & Grigsby. Media sponsored by 90.5 WESA, 91.3 WYEP, and NEXTpittsburgh. General operating support for Contemporary Craft is provided by the Allegheny Regional Asset District, the Elizabeth R. Raphael Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

ABOUT CONTEMPORARY CRAFT

Presenting contemporary art in craft mediums by regional, national, and international artists since 1971, CC offers cutting edge exhibitions focusing on multicultural diversity and non-mainstream art, as well as a range of studio workshops, community outreach programs, and a retail store. Through its mission of engaging the public in creative experiences through contemporary craft, CC offers meaningful art opportunities for 145,000 people a year through four core values: providing vital support for artists, filling critical gaps in public education; sharing cross cultural perspectives; and using art to build community.

CC is located at 2100 Smallman Street in the Strip District of Pittsburgh, PA. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 AM to 5 PM. Exhibition and informal, hands-on art activities in the Drop-In Studio are always free to the public. Contemporary Craft is committed to making its exhibitions, programs, and services accessible to the public. For questions related to accessible accommodations, please contact us. For more information, visit <http://www.contemporarycraft.org> or call 412.261.7003.

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