



MINDFUL

exploring mental health through art
september 18, 2015 - march 12, 2016
society for contemporary craft

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: NORAH GUIGNON 412.261.7003 | marketingmanager@contemporarycraft.org

SOCIETY FOR CONTEMPORARY CRAFT EXPLORES MENTAL HEALTH, RESILIENCY, AND CREATIVITY IN NEW EXHIBITION

Innovative Strip District art space debuts socially engaged creative experience free of charge

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS:

- Free admission
- Free hands-on making activity in the Drop-In Studio
- 14 artists
- 33 works of art
- Companion exhibitions and programs
- 18 community partners
- 5 local partner schools
- Free teacher's curriculum guide
- Pittsburgh premiere of the Depressed Cake Shop
- Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures partnership
- Studio Workshops

EXHIBITION DETAILS:

- DATES: September 18, 2015 - March 12, 2016
- PLACE: Society for Contemporary Craft (SCC)
2100 Smallman Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
- TIME: Monday - Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm
- ADMISSION: Free
- WEBSITE: www.exploremindfulart.com
- FACEBOOK: facebook.com/SCCPgh
- TWITTER: @SCCPgh
- INSTAGRAM: instagram.com/SCCPgh
- HASHTAG: #CRAFTYOURMIND

PITTSBURGH, PA, AUGUST 1, 2015

Someone you know lives with a mental health condition, yet this common illness often remains hidden behind a wall of secrecy and isolation. *Mindful: Exploring Mental Health Through Art* - the Society for Contemporary Craft's (SCC) latest **socially engaged art experience** - breaks down societal stigmas and offers an opportunity to encounter and understand mental health through the lens of contemporary craft. The exhibition opens on Friday, September 18, 2015 and will be on view through Saturday, March 12, 2016 at SCC's Strip District gallery located in the Produce Terminal at the intersection of 21st and Smallman Streets.

SCC PROVIDES PLATFORM FOR ARTISTS TO TAKE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

Featuring more than 30 works created by 14 contemporary artists, *Mindful* explores the impact that mental illness is having on society, and the role the arts can play to both encourage positive self-expression and guide effective mental health promotion and treatment. The exhibition examines creative responses to mental health conditions through the inclusion of artworks made by artists who have been diagnosed with or affected by mental illness.



MINDFUL

The idea of working with one's hands to navigate and understand complex emotions and experiences is one of SCC's core values. Executive director Janet McCall states: "Artists have unique problem solving abilities and offer fresh perspectives on complex issues through their artwork. In many cases, a handcrafted object communicates layers of emotion and experience in a way that words cannot. Each object in *Mindful* offers an opportunity for meaningful dialogue about mental health."

The show highlights a variety of techniques and forms that include innovative art expressions rooted in traditional craft materials, as well as work that explores unexpected relationships between craft and painting, sculpture, conceptual, and installation art.



Swoon
Memento Mori
Hand printed blockprint with coffee stain and cutout mylar
84" x 67"
Photo: Swoon Studio

● Brooklyn-based visual artist and printmaker **Swoon** explores the relationship between people and their built environment. Her first interventions in the urban landscape took the form of intricate, wheat-paste paper-cut portraits, often affixed to walls in hardscrabble places in cities around the world. More recently, she has been working collaboratively through her non-profit organization, the *Heliotrope Foundation*. Focusing on community revitalization in Braddock, PA, New Orleans, LA, and Haiti, these projects support artists' place-based interventions that explore how creativity can positively impact communities in times of crisis and change.

Her stunning mixed media work *Memento Mori*, shares a heart-wrenching depiction of her emaciated mother. "I never really understood the concept of mental illness or physical addiction until a few years ago. We need to understand people's actions in a different context so that we're less hateful or judgmental towards those who have experienced traumatic situations and are therefore at much greater risk. It's not so much about the individual taking personal responsibility as much as it is about understanding that we as a culture can't simply wash our hands of these people."

● Internationally acclaimed sculptor **Alison Saar's** carved figures and installations address humanity in the broadest sense and universal themes of vulnerability and hope. Through her works, *Pret-a-Porter* and *J'attends*, Saar constructs a visual language that is simultaneously historical and philosophical, accessible and explorative. The wood, tin, copper, paper, and other objects that she utilizes in her sculpture are often reclaimed or recycled material, revealing Saar's fondness for her supplies having, as she states, "former lives" and carrying "the histories of what they've witnessed." The humor and wordplay that she injects into the titles of her work speak to Saar's willingness to engage viewers' personal interpretations and imbue levity into otherwise serious subject matter.

MINDFUL

● Ceramic sculptor and adjunct instructor at Allegheny College in Meadville, PA, **Ian F. Thomas** has watched loved ones struggle with mental illness along with the years of trial and error finding the right prescription drug concoction to stabilize this all-consuming issue. With the works, *Compensation* and *Consumption*, Thomas examines the relationship between pharmaceutical drugs and their user while illustrating the daunting regulatory intake of medicines and the deep introspective view one might have contemplating their role in “normality.” Through art making, the artist poses questions about his relationships with objects, people and himself, and considers his work to be a window into his subconscious. It is not his intent for the viewer to grasp these specific notions but to come to the work with their personal histories and to derive a visceral understanding through their senses.

● A resident of Washington, DC, **Michael Janis** is an internationally recognized artist and co-director of the Washington Glass School—a hybrid school, studio, and public art production facility in Mount Rainier, MD. Janis reflects on social interactions and complex behaviors with his sculpture, and uses clear glass as a way of “seeing through” actions and intents. Each element in *Echoes* depicts a pair of overlapped faces created in fused glass powder and arranged to create a new, third face. Janis sees the interaction of the non-aligned faces as a depiction of the fate of both the inner and outer worlds. “One cannot change without leaning a little further into the shared world, and without recognizing that even in one’s solitude, one is always at some point touching someone else.”



Michael Janis
Echoes, 2015
Kilformed glass, glass powder imagery
10" x 30" x 6" (dimensions variable)
Photo: Anything Photographic

“OPEN SOURCE” EXHIBITION PLANNING

Following the significant impact of SCC’s 2014 social justice-centered exhibition *ENOUGH Violence: Artists Speak Out*, the organization once again enlisted the guidance of a wide variety of staff, academic experts, social service professionals, community partners, and the general public in the development of *Mindful*. From an open call for personal mental health narratives to language sensitivity training, **the innovative, crowd-sourcing approach to *Mindful* ensures the exhibition is connected to the community in a meaningful, genuine way.**

“The public outpouring of support for *Mindful* has been humbling and inspiring,” says Janet McCall. “Mental health is a public health issue that truly affects us all. The community has been extremely open and generous with their personal stories, creative endeavors, and scholarly expertise. Striving to incorporate their experiences and knowledge into the exhibition has led to a more relatable and impactful experience for everyone.”



CRAFT YOUR MIND

The exhibition's hashtag, **#craftyourmind**, originated at the 2015 Three Rivers Arts Festival in a *Mindful*-themed window installation created by local artist Daniel Baxter of the Kreepy Doll Factory. Daniel's concept of "crafting your mind" conveys our ability to shape our own experiences and perspectives through art making and open dialogue.

A series of events and weekend activities encouraging visitors to "craft their minds" are planned throughout the run of the exhibition. Lectures, artist demonstrations, Saturday Information Sessions with community partners, gallery tours, and Studio workshops allow audiences to connect with artists and respond to their art. Resources such as a free curriculum guide, a mental health fable titled *Osprey* by local illustrator Nathaniel Taylor, and a full-color catalogue further complement the exhibition. SCC's **Drop-In Studio** (free and open to the public during regular business hours) will feature a hands-on, art-making activity appropriate for visitors of all ages and skill-levels titled "Weaving with Found Objects." Designed by exhibition artist Grace Kubilius, the activity invites visitors to experience the meditative flow of working with their hands.

Mindful's impact extends beyond the primary gallery walls and includes **companion exhibitions** in both the SCC Studio and SCC BNY Mellon Center Satellite Gallery. *Community Voices* (September 18 - December 7, 2015 in the SCC Studio) is an exhibition of stories and artwork shared by 10 regional, national and international artists whose lives are affected by mental illness. *Community Minded* (December 15, 2015 - March 12, 2016 in the SCC Studio) will showcase student artwork responding to issues of mental health. *The Invisible One* (January 22 - April 24, 2016 at the BNY Mellon Center Satellite Gallery) features the work of three contemporary artists exploring "invisible" populations within their communities and the ways in which the arts can bridge action and understanding.

SCC is proud to be the non-profit partner for a *Literary Evening* with author Andrew Solomon presented by Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures on Monday, December 7, 2015, 7:30 - 9:30 pm. Solomon's newest book, *Far from the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity*, shares stories of families coping with deafness, autism, schizophrenia. Tickets for this *Literary Evening* with Andrew Solomon are available by calling 412.622.8866 or by visiting www.pittsburghlectures.org.

A complete calendar of exhibition programs and events is available at **www.exploremindfulart.com**.

BREAKING THE STIGMA... BEYOND PITTSBURGH

Mindful is slated to travel to several venues after its debut in Pittsburgh. Confirmed locations include the Ohio Craft Museum in Columbus, OH (summer 2016), the Daura Gallery, Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, VA (fall 2016), and the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art in Virginia Beach, VA (winter/spring 2017). "The fact that we have already booked three cities for the national tour of *Mindful* before the exhibition has even opened in Pittsburgh is a testament to society's desire to approach difficult subject matter from a place of positivity, creativity, and hope," says Janet McCall. "*Mindful* provides an accessible and inspiring exploration of mental health, which ultimately aids in the elimination of harmful stigma."



MINDFUL



OPENING WEEKEND CELEBRATION

SCC will mark the **opening weekend** of the exhibition with a free, public reception on Friday, September 18 from 5:30 to 8 pm. There is a \$5 suggested donation at the door. Opening celebration events will continue Saturday, September 19, from 10 am - 3 pm. The day's activities include the Pittsburgh premiere of the **Depressed Cake Shop**, an international pop-up bake sale raising mental health awareness one grey, sweet treat at a time. Several local bakers and bakeries will be contributing cookies, cupcakes, and pastries to the cause, including: 2 Local Girls, Colangelo's Bakery, Eliza's Oven, Glutteny Bakery, Prantl's Bakery, and Vanilla Pastry Studio. From 12 - 2 pm, visitors are invited to a *Dialogue with the Artists*, where exhibiting artists will be on hand in SCC's gallery to talk about their work.

MINDFUL SUPPORT

Mindful: Exploring Mental Health Through Art is made possible by the Staunton Farm Foundation, The Fisher Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation, The Fine Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and media sponsors NEXTpittsburgh, WESA, and WYEP. Additional support is provided by the Allegheny Regional Asset District, the Elizabeth R. Raphael Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

ABOUT CONTEMPORARY CRAFT

Presenting contemporary art in craft media by regional, national and international artists since 1971, the Society for Contemporary Craft (SCC) 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, SCC offers meaningful art opportunities for more than 135,000 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. SCC is located at 2100 Smallman Street in the Strip District of Pittsburgh, PA. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm. The satellite gallery is located in the "T" station lobby of BNY Mellon Center in downtown Pittsburgh, and is open daily from 6 am through midnight. Exhibitions and informal, hands-on art activities in the Drop-In Studio are always free to the public. For more information, visit www.contemporarycraft.org or call 412.261.7003.

PHOTOS

To view the complete collection of available high-res *Mindful* photos, visit www.exploremindfulart.com/mindfulimages and use the password MINDfulimages. Email Norah Guignon at marketingmanager@contemporarycraft.org for files.