

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**2016 Cheteyan Scholar Christian Morris Combines
Method Acting and Clay in Strip District Community Project**
Contemporary Craft Summer Residency to Focus on Creative Placemaking

PITTSBURGH, PA – May 13, 2016 – The Society for Contemporary Craft (SCC) welcomes multimedia artist and Leetsdale, PA native Christian Morris as its 2016 Cheteyan Scholar. Offered to promising university students pursuing a career in the arts, this paid internship provides in-depth exposure to the daily operations of a mid-sized arts nonprofit. As part of his experience with SCC, Morris will also serve as the organization's summer Artist-In-Residence.

Contemporary Craft has long celebrated its unique location in the Strip District Produce Terminal as a source of endless creative inspiration. The urban environment has infused countless exhibitions, studio workshops, and programs with the gritty charm central to the neighborhood's identity. Each summer, the organization invites an artist to create a body of work reflecting the hustle, bustle, history, and magic of the historic neighborhood as part of its Artist-in-Residence program. This year, Morris will take the residency experience one step further.

A senior at California State University Channel Islands in Camarillo, CA, Morris's primary artistic focus is the exploration of identity through an intriguing combination of method acting and ceramics. This summer, he will engage Strip District residents, business owners, and visitors in interviews about the neighborhood that will be incorporated into an interactive installation of clay and sound. Titled "Practices of Listening," the project will focus on questions about art, craft, identity, history, and technology. Morris will interview community members using his training in the Meisner method of acting; a process during which he reflects back to the public their own emotions and responses as a way of actively listening. Segments from the recorded interviews will be incorporated into an interactive "map" made of ceramic speakers.

"The summer residency program provides emerging artists with a blank canvas for experimentation," says SCC's Executive Director, Janet McCall. "Christian's project is innovative, unorthodox, and expands our understanding of the relationship between craft and community. By including the public's personal experiences in his work, the artist is providing us with a stake in the final product—a piece of ownership and a sense of pride in both the art and the neighborhood."

When not out in the Pittsburgh community conducting interviews, Morris will be working in a temporary studio located in Contemporary Craft's main gallery space. The summer residency program fulfills one of SCC's core values of using art to strengthen community, and a significant part of the artist's experience will be interacting with the diverse visitors that pass through the doors of this free-of-charge arts organization. As the Strip District undergoes widespread development and change, Contemporary Craft aims to use art and art making to provide a strong and lasting sense of neighborhood identity. Known as "creative placemaking," projects like Morris' forge a memorable connection between the public and a specific place.

The artist's time at Contemporary Craft also signals a conscious effort to encourage greater diversity in arts professions and opportunities. "Thought leaders like Darrell Kinsel of BOOM Concepts have increased our awareness of the absence of black men in arts programming," says Janet McCall. "Like many arts organizations, we are committed to increasing racial equity within the field. We're excited for the energy and vision Christian will bring to SCC this summer, and hope his presence and contributions to the community inspire future artists of color."

Christian Morris will be in SCC's gallery space and available to interact with the public Tuesday through Saturday, 12-5pm beginning on Tuesday, May 31, 2016. He can be found strolling the Strip looking for interview subjects from 10am-12pm on those same days. The residency will come to a close on Saturday, August 27, 2016. The public is encouraged to visit often to watch Morris' project expand throughout the summer months.

Now in its fourth year, SCC's summer Artist-In-Residence program encourages young artists to draw inspiration from the vibrancy, history, and flux of the Strip District to create a project or installation that evolves throughout the season. Past artists include Jennifer Moss (Savannah, GA), Nicole Aquillano (Boston, MA), and Daniel Baxter (Pittsburgh, PA).

The Judy G. Cheteyan Scholarship, a paid internship opportunity, was created in 2001 to provide a university student with diverse professional experience within arts administration. The scholarship is supported by the generosity of Judy and Michael Cheteyan.

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 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. SCC is located at 2100 Smallman Street in the Strip District of Pittsburgh, PA. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. The satellite gallery is located in the “T” station lobby of BNY Mellon Center in downtown Pittsburgh, and is open daily from 6:00 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.

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*Please contact Norah Guignon at nguignon@contemporarycraft.org
for additional details or high res images.*



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Artist Christian Morris;
Ceramic Speaker; Speaker and Ear

