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Contemporary Craft Announces *Pittsburgh IS Craft* Initiative

PITTSBURGH, PA (January 2026) – Contemporary Craft (CC) is excited to announce the expansion of its *Pittsburgh IS Craft* initiative through partnerships with Pittsburgh Glass Center (PGC) and Union Project (UP).

Pittsburgh has long been considered as a city of makers, and while the intentions and techniques have grown and changed, the traditional mediums of metals, wood, ceramic, glass, and fibers are alive and well. When Rachel Saul Rearick stepped into the role of Contemporary Craft Executive Director in 2021, she saw the potential to unite the city's vibrant craft community and make Pittsburgh a major craft destination that not only brings national and international tourists to the city but also engages local and regional residents.

More than just a marketing initiative, *Pittsburgh IS Craft* seeks to bring Pittsburgh's craft community to the forefront, promoting Pittsburgh as a national and international craft destination.

For the past four years, Contemporary Craft has been laying the groundwork for *Pittsburgh IS Craft* through partnerships with the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council and forthcoming with Handmade Arcade for the Modern Craft Market. The initiative has been gaining significant momentum with the CC expansion into the former Hunter Saw Building earlier this year. And with the recent expansion of the Pittsburgh Glass Center and the upcoming expansion of Union Project's ceramics program, this is the ideal time for the organizations to unite as partners around *Pittsburgh IS Craft*.

Between Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh Glass Center and Union Project, the organizations encompass what most people relate to as the traditional craft materials – fibers, ceramics, glass, metal, and wood. The concentration of organizations working to elevate these materials uniquely positions Pittsburgh in the national craft community. The three organizations also engage with more than 100,000 people each year, with that number continuing to grow.

"We are excited to announce this partnership and expand our work. In the coming months we look forward to sharing more about our vision for Pittsburgh and its role in the national and international craft scene, especially with the Modern Craft Market approaching in March," said Rachel Rearick, Executive Director of Contemporary Craft. "The wonderful thing about *Pittsburgh IS Craft* is that it's been here all along. Our city is rich in craft history and innovation, and we can't wait to amplify this for our region, across the country, and across the world. For years, Pittsburgh's been known for sports—we believe that it's time for Pittsburgh to be known as the Heart of Craft!"

Over the next several months, Contemporary Craft, the Pittsburgh Glass Center, and Union Project will work to collectively brand their events and workshops under the *Pittsburgh IS Craft* banner and explore ways they can work together to amplify the message that Pittsburgh is where you can see,

make, and buy craft. The partnerships with Pittsburgh Glass Center and Union Project represent what Contemporary Craft hopes will be the first of many, as it looks to grow *Pittsburgh IS Craft* to include more Pittsburgh organizations in the future.

"Pittsburgh's arts and culture sector is a cornerstone of the city's identity. *Pittsburgh IS Craft* will ensure that the arts, and craft in particular, continue to thrive, enriching our community while also contributing to Pittsburgh's reputation as a vibrant, world-class city. As the arts attract audiences from across the region, the economic benefits extend far beyond the organizations involved, boosting local hospitality, dining, and retail sectors, and supporting a diverse range of small businesses, including craft makers," said Heather McElwee of Pittsburgh Glass Center.

"In a region full of potters, we're supporting local artists in the making of amazing studio and production pottery, ceramic sculpture and murals, using ceramics in architectural applications, ceramics as activism, and much more. Through the *Pittsburgh IS Craft* initiative, we can bring even more attention to these varied art forms, as well as the diverse artists who make them, in ways that raise cultural awareness and drive economic impact simultaneously," said Jeffrey Dorsey of the Union Project.

About Contemporary Craft

Celebrating 50 years in 2021, Contemporary Craft (CC) was founded in 1971 by Elizabeth Rockwell Raphael to broaden opportunities for craft artists to exhibit and sell their work. The impetus behind its creation was the belief that many artists working with traditional craft materials were developing a unique vocabulary for these materials and in the process, they were opening a new avenue of creative effort in contemporary art. Today, Contemporary Craft offers innovative exhibitions focused on multicultural diversity and contemporary art; produces a range of hands-on workshops focused on fiber, metal, and wood; has an international artist in residence program; engages in community programming and affinity group support and has a retail store. The organization campus currently comprises two facilities with a total of 24,000 sq. ft. as well as an artist in residence house. To learn more visit contemporarycraft.org

About Pittsburgh Glass Center

Celebrating 25 years in 2026, Pittsburgh Glass Center (PGC) is a nonprofit, public access glass art center where anyone can take classes, explore the contemporary glass gallery, shop for glass gifts, and watch live glassblowing demonstrations. Since its opening, PGC has educated over 750,000 individuals, contributed to the ongoing development of the city's East End, and made Pittsburgh a significant hub in the international studio glass community. A multimillion-dollar expansion in 2024 nearly doubled its capacity, allowing it to meet the increasing demand for glass programs and studios. PGC continues to cultivate an inclusive and welcoming environment that encourages everyone, from the casually curious to the master artist, to learn, create, and be inspired by glass. 25 years and still glowing! To learn more, visit www.pittsburghglasscenter.org

About Union Project

Union Project (UP) is a community ceramics center presenting classes, open studio sessions, studio rentals, and events in a historic building. In addition, outreach programs deliver ceramics to

communities across the county through the Wheel Mobile, a mobile ceramics studio. Programs provide fun and meaningful opportunities for people of all ages and skill levels to explore, learn, and create in clay. Established in 2001, the organization's continued dedication to maintaining a professional-level ceramics facility and making ceramics accessible to everyone has resulted in a welcoming environment housed in a stunning facility. To learn more, visit unionproject.org