

THE GADROON

Newsletter of the South Carolina Silver Society, Inc.

SUMMER 2018

SCSS SCHOLAR COMPLETES STUDY

The South Carolina Silver Society this summer was able to sponsor a scholar at the Museum of Early Decorative Arts' Summer Institute. The summer intern, Hampton Smith, is a senior at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill majoring in Art History and American Studies where he serves as the student executive for UNC's Arts Everywhere program. He has worked at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum and the Ackland Art Museum. Academically, Hampton's research investigates how craft processes in the eighteenth and nineteenth transnational America influenced, relied upon, and shaped technology, science, and economics. Hampton previously worked on an upcoming exhibition of Gorham Silverware at RISD, which led him to pursue a similar project while at MESDA's Summer Institute. Instead of profiling the life of Charleston craftsman John Ewan, the maker of a particular silver object of Hampton's focus, his project argues for a vision of appreciating objects via routine operations of maintenance and repair. The presentation argues that silver objects reveal enslaved individuals' production of knowledge through the act of cleaning. Indeed, through narrating the life and manuscript of enslaved housekeeper Robert Roberts alongside the history of science, the presentation aims to reveal display silver's agency in fostering enslaved ingenuity.

Hampton Smith will be the speaker at the SCSS annual dinner. The dinner has been scheduled for Friday, February 8, 2019, at the Palmetto Club in Columbia. Watch for more information.

INTERWOVEN TO BE EXHIBITED IN CHARLESTON

Interwoven: The Art of Indigo and Silver brings together three contemporary artists—a

silversmith, textile designer, and photographer — and a curator, all of whom are deeply influenced by the South Carolina Lowcountry's artistic and cultural heritage as well as committed to the future vitality of the arts in Charleston. Exploring themes related to the art of indigo and silver, Jack Alterman, Kaminer Haislip, and Leigh Magar will exhibit their independent work and together create collaborative installations in the City Gallery, a non-commercial gallery, which is owned and operated by the City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs. Curator Brandy Culp has worked with these artists to weave a story based on their artwork and the Lowcountry's rich and varied culture as it relates to indigo and silver.

This exhibition explores the intersection between the past and present while recognizing that ultimately contemporary art and craft must be rooted in its own time. Inextricably linked, indigo and silver are transformative as raw materials, imbued with symbolism that transcends time and cultures, and imbedded within the early cultural fabric of the Caribbean and Carolina Lowcountry. Although inspired by Charleston's rich cultural heritage, each artist brings unique contemporary perspective and original artwork to the exhibition.

Interwoven will include approximately 60 objects, including silver hollowware, flatware and jewelry, textile art, artist renderings, and photography related to the shades of silver and indigo.

Haislip is the only practicing female silversmith in Charleston that continues to employ traditional metalworking techniques and tools that have been used for centuries. As a contemporary silversmith, she is inspired by as well as carrying forth the city's long-standing silversmithing tradition—the silver and metals manufacturing trade was vital to Charleston's economy from the eighteenth through the early-twentieth centuries. With a nod to the past, she is most inspired by today's domestic rituals and enhancing daily life through the creation of

functional handcrafted objects that are entirely contemporary in form.

A milliner turned textile artist, Magar has established a small-batch label that combines art, fashion, history, and performance. The "seed to stitch" project was inspired by Eliza Lucas Pinckney who brought indigo to the Lowcountry region and made it a cash crop in the mid-1700s. She interweaves design and nature with her local garden where indigo is grown and then used to create one-of-a-kind collections. Her work includes hand-dyed and hand-stitched garments and goods, textile art, and installations. Magar is inspired by traditional and simple sewing techniques, such as quilt making, rag quilting, and hand sewn-textiles, which she interlaces with contemporary, non-traditional elements.

Through a new photography series focusing on the colors of indigo and silver, Alterman explores Magar's textile art from seed to stitch and Haislip's metalwork from ore to object, interweaving the two historically connected materials as well as the contemporary objects.

Alterman explores color, texture, creation, and transformation in a grouping of photographs titled "Shades of Indigo and Silver." In addition, Alterman, Haislip, and Magar will create a group installation for the exhibition inspired by the silhouette and miniature—art forms with long-standing Lowcountry traditions.

Alterman, Haislip, and Magar will present their current work as well as art specifically created for an exhibition in the City Gallery. Providing a modern look at historically significant mediums, these artists are transforming materials important to the city's cultural fabric into contemporary art and inspiring appreciation of waning craft traditions among future generations. In addition, the collaboration between the artists and curator will result in a colorful, visually stunning and engaging showing of indigo and silver.

Interwoven: The Art of Indigo and Silver will be a never before showing of silver, textile art, and photography as it relates the theme of indigo and silver. *Interwoven* will be on exhibit from August 24, 2018, to October 7, 2018 at the City Gallery located at 34 Prioleau Street in historic Downtown Charleston. City Gallery will host an artists' talk on September 2, 2018, at 2:00 PM. The event is free and open to the public.

SCSS WEBSITE UPDATED

A special word of thanks goes to SCSS member Henry Brown for his diligence in updating the South Carolina Silver Society's website. In addition to a brief history of the SCSS and its philosophy, scholarly articles, membership information, and news about the SCSS, the website has copies of back issues of *The Gadroon*, the SCSS newsletter. The website can be found at <http://southcarolinasilversociety.org>

CHARLESTON SILVER SOLD AT RECENT AUCTION

Several lots of South Carolina silver were sold at Charleton Hall Galleries on May 31, 2018. Among the lots were sixteen pieces of flatware made by James Spear who was working in Charleston from around 1846 until 1871. The lot sold for \$250 against an auction estimate of \$300-\$500. Another lot featured eight pieces of flatware with marks for various Charleston silversmiths including William Ewan, William Carrington, and Nathaniel and Sidney Hayden. The lot sold for \$600 against an auction estimate of \$300-\$500.

Two other lots at the same sale of interest to collectors of both South Carolina and South Carolina related silver included a late 19th century sterling silver cup retailed by Charleston's Carrington, Thomas & Co. The cup sold for \$450 against an estimate of \$200 - \$400. The second was a pair of George IV silver entree dishes and covers by English silversmith Paul Storr. Bearing the London hallmark for 1825, the sterling dishes featured gadroon rims with foliate and shells intervals, complete hallmarks, and were engraved with the family crest. The domed fused-plate covers also were marked with a heraldic crest finial above arms of Sir William Fowle Middleton with the motto: REGARDEZ MON DROIT. This branch of the Middleton family is directly linked to the Middletons of Charleston and Middleton Place. Sir William Fowle Middleton, 1st Baronet was born in Charleston in 1748 and returned to England in 1775 to claim his inheritance and

title. A Member of Parliament and High Sheriff of Suffolk, he died in 1829. His had one son who inherited the title Sir William Fowle Middleton, 2nd Baronet (1784-1860). After active bidding, when the hammer fell, the dishes and related covers brought \$6,500.

JEFFERSON CUPS CREATED BY THE NATION'S THIRD PRESIDENT

The popular Jefferson Cup so often given as gifts to mark special occasions has an interesting history. Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and the country's third president, first created his iconic cups in 1810. A teacher and close friend of his, George Wythe, who died in 1806, had bequeathed Jefferson his collection of silver vessels. The cups Jefferson inherited were melted down, and Jefferson commissioned a new design through famed Philadelphia silversmith, John Letelier, son of a silversmith of the same name, who created a set of eight cups.

The simple design of the cups was crafted with workmanship in mind. The sleek sides, short stature, and weighted bottoms created a sturdy and durable vessel. At Jefferson's direction, the originals featured a gilded interior achieved through a gold wash, and four were engraved "G.W. to "T.J." and four simply marked "T.J."

For the rest of Jefferson's life, the cups remained at his home at Monticello where records show they were used often. After his death on July 4, 1826, his daughter Martha Jefferson Randolph divided them among her six children and one grandson. Six of the Jefferson cups are preserved and on display in the dining room at Monticello, but the whereabouts of the other two is not known.

Having silver pieces melted down and fashioned into new objects was nothing new to Jefferson. In September 1808, he wrote from Washington to daughter Martha, "I forgot to bring with me the gravy spoons to be converted into dessert spoons. I must therefore pray you send them to me. I think I mentioned a spare ladle." Martha replied, "I have sent 4 spoons and a large french ladle, there being 2 others left, one french and one english..."

GORHAM'S BIRD'S NEST CONTINUES TO FASCINATE COLLECTORS

Silver lovers and collectors almost everywhere continue to seek and to be fascinated by "Bird's Nest," one Gorham's most difficult to find patterns from the late 19th century's Gilded Age. Replacements, Ltd. recently posted to its website a most interesting article on "Bird's Nest." To read the article, go to the following website: <http://blog.replacements.com/2018/08/08/↓-museum-feature-gorham-birds-nest-salt-spoon-↓/>

An interesting and informative video on "Bird's Nest" can be found on YouTube by at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCizUJhFAM>

For pictures of various pieces in the "Bird's Nest" pattern, go to the Pinterest website at <https://www.pinterest.com/catrigdon/gorham-birds-nest-silver/>

Even though "Bird's Nest" is rare and expensive, pieces often can be found at Charleston's The Silver Vault as well as other silver retailers including Replacements, Ltd.

SCSS MEMBERS ASKED TO SUBMIT IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

Members are asked to continue to submit ideas for articles or other information that could be included in future issues of *The Gadroon* to Frank White at frankwhite@bellsouth.net.

SOUTH CAROLINA SILVER SOCIETY, INC.

Judy Anderson, President

Bart Mullin, Immediate past president

Henry Brown, Vice-president

Judy Anderson, Acting Secretary/Treasurer

Frank White, Newsletter

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