



Twenty-First Century Heirlooms

April 28 – September 15, 2013

Main Theme

The works included in ***Twenty-First Century Heirlooms*** represent artists thinking about how any kind of object or idea carries meaning and value, and how those aspects change over time. They draw on the past and look at history through a contemporary lens—offering comparisons and contrasts between the past and present, as well as new models for understanding how history imbues ideas and objects with meaning and how that is carried forward.

Heirlooms

When the word **heirloom** is used, most think of something passed from person to person. This exhibition argues that an heirloom could be object, idea, or tradition—carried from the past and treasured, in some way, in the present.

At its core, the idea of an heirloom connects to what we value and why. These artists all draw on histories and ideas that are important to them for various reasons. Sometimes the connection to a “keepsake” is not immediately obvious visually, but there is a link through a type of material used or a technique. For example, **Amber Cowan** uses recycled glass with a certain history and **Lucrezia Bieler** uses a centuries-old papercutting technique.

Artist Intent

**Please see the text that addresses each artist individually for more information on their subject matter, materials, and techniques—it is meant to underscore why these artists were chosen for inclusion in this particular exhibition. These artists are at various points in their respective careers. They come from all across the country and from a variety of backgrounds.

While there are many histories from which to draw, most of the artists whose works are included here are looking at Western European and American traditions (rather than Native American, Caribbean, Asian, etc.). This can be a complicated topic because many traditions are a blend of ideas from several cultures.



Objective

One of the goals of this exhibition is to encourage people to think about what we value and why. Things that were important to earlier generations may not be important to us, either as individuals or society as a whole.

What does matter?

If it is an object, do we know its history?

How did we acquire it?

If it is an idea, where did it come from?

Do we value objects differently today because consumerism encourages replacing and buying the next version of something over repairing the original item?

Special Note

**Using money as a material in art works

(Artist **Stacey Lee Webber** uses coins and a dollar bill)

Staff research suggests that using money to create works of art is a complicated topic.

Some sources say it is illegal to deface money in any context. Government law includes use of the word "fraudulent." Money that is not in circulation does not seem to be as problematic—in fact, you can purchase shredded money from the treasury. The treasury website indicates that re-use of the shredded currency is fine but intent is important.

Most of the artists that use money do so because it is money. They want the meaning and association of it to be incorporated into the work itself and do not try to pass it off as anything else. Regardless of how you personally feel about the topic or how the law is interpreted, U.S. money in the form of dollars bills and coins has been turned into some very compelling works of art (and most of the artists have not been prosecuted for their use of the material).