

A journey to the origins, artists and techniques of American craft

# CRAFT IN AMERICA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## *CRAFT IN AMERICA: CELEBRATION*

Premieres on PBS Friday, December 11, 2015 at 10:00pm\*



Los Angeles, CA – *Craft in America*, the Peabody Award-winning PBS series, marks the holiday season with an all new hour titled *CELEBRATION*, premiering nationwide on PBS, Friday, December 11th at 10pm\*. Throughout its seven seasons, *Craft in America* has highlighted the finest examples of American artistry. This hour adds another important chapter to that anthology by examining the role craft plays in our holiday customs, with a focus on our winter observances and the traditions that are handed down from one generation to another as well as new rituals that define the season.



*Craft in America* takes its cameras to Detroit, a city that was once the heartbeat of industrial America and today is being revitalized, in part, by artists who are building on the traditions established by previous generations of Detroit artisans. This rebirth can be seen at Pewabic, founded in 1905, long honored for its museum quality ceramics with a unique iridescent glaze, and now one of only two active turn-of-the-century pottery studios in the country. *CELEBRATION* focuses on Pewabic's holiday contribution, the creation of its *12 Days of Christmas* ornaments that not only decorate Christmas trees throughout the city but also are sought after by families across the country. Pewabic's potters and artists are well aware of their importance to Detroit. Chris Mayse, kiln technician at the studio, says, "I think Detroit is currently at a turning point for young artists, much like Berlin was, where inexpensive space and materials breed new art which with any luck can revitalize this city."



In Chicago, artist Babatunde has been making kinaras, the candleholders for Kwanzaa celebrations, for more than forty years. Based on African harvest celebrations, Kwanzaa is a time of self-affirmation and reflection for African American communities and families. At Chicago State University, we join with people of all ages in the music and dancing of the Kwanzaa festivities, and are given insights into the meaning of the ceremonial table and the traditions of the seven days of Kwanzaa. As Babatunde explains, "Kwanzaa is a time where we ask what can we do this year that we didn't do last year? Kwanzaa honors people coming together to make a better life."



Despite the ubiquity of email, Facebook and Instagram, there is something about our holidays that encourages us to embrace earlier customs, including sending greeting cards to friends and family. Woodblock artist Yoshiko Yamamoto shows us how she creates a special *Winter Cardinals* card for this episode; from the inspirational walk in the forest near her home in Tacoma, Washington, to the first sketch, carving and painting the block, to hand cranking the press and printing the vibrant card. Yamamoto and her husband Bruce Smith founded The Arts and Craft Press and over the decades she has created more than 50 holiday cards.



Yamamoto then shares her *Winter Cardinals* design with ceramic artist Nawal Motawi in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Nawal and the artists at Motawi Tileworks translate the *Winter Cardinals* into a ceramic tile, using their signature raised-line technique to produce a simple and elegant work of art. They use a combination of computer tools (including a CNC router to create a detailed mold) along with traditional hand craft methods of applying glazes to create distinctive interpretations full of the color and feel of the original winter scene.



The hour concludes in San Francisco where the Chinese New Year festival has grown to be the largest celebration of Asian culture outside of Asia. Started in 1860 by Chinese immigrants to America, the 150-year-old tradition of celebrating the Chinese New Year with a parade continues to thrive. Artists Corey Chan and Jeff Lee carry on the tradition of the lion dance and dragon-making to a new generation of artists, while Dave Thomas, Stephanie Mufson, and Yumei Hou, with a staff of exceptional artists, create over 20 floats for the parade, estimated to draw more than a million spectators. The artists' dazzling ability to combine form with function comes together in an explosion of light, color and fireworks as the parade's finale, the astonishing 268-foot red and gold dragon, glides through the nighttime San Francisco streets – a tribute to the important history of Chinese Americans and a celebration that connects us all.

CRAFT IN AMERICA is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing original handcrafted work through the Peabody Award-winning documentary series on PBS nationwide and the free-to-the-public Craft in America Center located in Los Angeles, which offers artist talks, exhibitions, workshops and a library. With thirteen episodes produced since 2007, *CRAFT IN AMERICA* takes viewers on a journey to the artists, origins and techniques of American craft. Each episode contains stories from diverse regions and cultures, blending history with living practice and exploring issues of identity, ritual, philosophy and creative expression. Ancillary projects include extensive websites providing hours of online videos and interactive learning materials, as well as museum exhibitions, and the Random House book *Craft in America: Celebrating Two Centuries of Artists and Objects*.

For more about Craft in America:



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\*check local listings

Photos courtesy of Mark Markley, Motawi Tileworks.

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Additional images of all the artists' work are available at:

PBS Pressroom: [pressroom.pbs.org/Programs/c/CRAFT-IN-AMERICA/702-Celebration.aspx](http://pressroom.pbs.org/Programs/c/CRAFT-IN-AMERICA/702-Celebration.aspx)

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