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News Release

## **Metal Museum *Tributaries* exhibition highlights industrial steel as sculpture**

Fifth-generation steelworker Thomas Campbell honors familial tradition in *Tributaries: Thomas Campbell* / *Corollary*

“Industrial work is exhausting, dirty, and unglamorous, and it often goes unrecognized in our modern world, but there is so much hidden beauty in it. I’m always trying to bring that out in my work.” – Thomas Campbell

**MEMPHIS, Tenn. (April 28, 2022)** – Fifth-generation steelworker and sculptor Thomas Campbell’s boundary-bending *Tributaries* exhibition opens May 22, 2022, at the Metal Museum. It marks a departure in concept for the studio artist as he shapes both the form and function of his work. The evolution is also Campbell’s way of embracing his family’s roots in the steel fabrication industry, which date back nearly 150 years.

Campbell cites both as the primary inspirations for his work.

“These skills were passed down to me through generations, and I do not take that lightly,” he said. “I want to honor this in my work and push the familial tradition in a direction it hasn’t gone before. I want my family to see my work and know that they’re a part of it.”

Upon graduating from Hendrix College (Conway, AR), Campbell spent seven years working as a fabricator at Bemberg Steel, a time he views as instrumental to learning the fundamentals of the steel trade.

From there, Campbell further refined his art as a fellow at the Penland School of Craft (Penland, NC) and a resident at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts (Deer Isle, ME).

“Once I left the shop to pursue the [fellowship] at Penland, I began to realize the magnitude of the industrial work that was being done at Bemberg,” Campbell said. “I’ve always loved working on a larger scale because of this. It feels more like home to me.”

Campbell also takes inspiration from others in the metalworking field including his friend and mentor, Hoss Haley, the Museum's 2016 Master Metalsmith. In fact, Campbell said viewers will see reflections of Haley in a few of the pieces in *Tributaries: Thomas Campbell | Corollary*.

The theme "corollary" came out of the processes Campbell used to create the spherical patterns in the exhibition. His dedication to detail, especially at a large scale, and his comprehensive knowledge of material bring a precision to his art. He relied heavily on technical drawing and pattern development for this exhibition, which resulted in nearly 0% material waste.

"On a macro level, there is a definite corollary relationship between my roots in the steel trade and my current work," Campbell said. "From industry, this work has emerged. If you would've told me 10 years ago that I would be making sculpture for a living today, I never would've believed it."

Campbell's work has been shown at the Metal Museum, Blue Spiral 1 (Asheville, NC), Signature Gallery (Atlanta, GA) and the Mint Museum (Charlotte, NC) His pieces are held in private collections and the permanent collection of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (Little Rock, AR).

#### **Event Details:**

*Tributaries: Thomas Campbell | Corollary* opens May 22 and closes July 17. The exhibit will be on display in the Keeler Gallery. A closing reception will take place 3-5 p.m. on Saturday, July 16.

#### **About the Metal Museum**

The Metal Museum is the only institution in the United States devoted exclusively to the preservation, promotion, and advancement of the art and craft of fine metalwork. This mission is achieved through four primary program areas – exhibitions, collections, studio practice, and community education and engagement. Programs are facilitated on the Museum grounds and at locations across the Mid-South. Located on 3.2 acres of historic property overlooking the Mississippi River, the Museum grounds include the main Museum building as well as the Metalworking Facilities, Library + Resource Center, and private artist residences. Learn more about the Museum and its programs by visiting our website at [metalmuseum.org](http://metalmuseum.org).

The Museum receives operating support from ArtsMemphis and the Tennessee Arts Commission. Programming support is received from the Hyde Family Foundation, the Windgate Charitable Foundation, and hundreds of corporate, foundation, and individual supporters.

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High-resolution images of artwork and exhibit graphics are available upon request. Please contact Jenn Godwin, Communications Manager for the Metal Museum, at (901) 774-6380 or [jenngodwin@metalmuseum.org](mailto:jenngodwin@metalmuseum.org).