

News Release

Artist's modern twist on reliquaries kicks off this year's *Tributaries Series* at the Metal Museum

Becky McDonah elevates COVID-19 essentials, other objects in exhibition opening March 13



Becky McDonah (American, born 1972), *Vexing the Virus: A Reliquary for Hand Sanitizer and Nitrile Gloves*, 2021. Copper, brass, turquoise, glass, nitrile gloves, hand sanitizer. Artwork and Photo Courtesy of the Artist.

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (Feb. 23, 2022) – The newest additions to the Metal Museum's *Tributaries Series* are three contemporary artists who construct vivid worlds through their works, beginning March 13 with an artist who examines the necessity—and occasional scarcity—of toilet paper and other everyday objects.

Drawing her inspiration from the Middle Ages, Pennsylvania-based artist Becky McDonah seeks to elevate the ordinary through the creation of reliquaries, the ornate containers made throughout history to preserve and accentuate religious relics.

To emphasize commonplace objects such as an N95 mask and hand sanitizer, McDonah puts them on a literal pedestal in a visually playful manner, which invites viewers to consider their importance to modern-day life. The rarer these objects become because of shortages, the more revered they are to society, McDonah's work illustrates.

McDonah's fascination with reliquaries stems from their ability to elaborately protect and display venerated objects while also limiting access to the object. Her works invite discussion about subjects like the environment, the COVID-19 pandemic, past and present societies, personal memories, and the human condition.

"The 'found object,'" McDonah says, "is of the utmost importance because it enhances the level of meaning as I create the work, and that is ultimately passed on to the viewer."

McDonah's piece *Particulate Protection: A Reliquary for the N95 Mask* was one of two winners in the Art of the State 2021 purchase prize show held by the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg.

The *Tributaries Series* began in 2008 to support emerging and mid-career artists through solo exhibitions at the Metal Museum. With over 40 *Tributaries* exhibitions completed or in the planning process, the Museum has celebrated some of the most talented artists who are shaping the metals field today.

Other artists who are part of the 2022 *Tributaries Series* include Thomas Campbell, an iron worker living in North Carolina who delves into the abstract, undulating nature of steel, and Morgan Asoyuf, an indigenous metalsmith and jeweler whose artwork embodies the artistic traditions of the Tsm'syen people of the Pacific Northwest Coast.

Event Details:

Tributaries: Becky McDonah | Evaluating Essentials opens March 13, 2022, and closes May 15, 2022. The exhibit will be on display in the Keeler Gallery. An artist reception and gallery talk will be held on May 15, 2022.

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.

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

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.