

## Smithsonian American Art Museum Announces 18 New Fellows

The [Smithsonian American Art Museum](#) has announced the appointment of eighteen new fellows for the 2010–2011 academic year. Among the museum fellows is UNT College of Visual Arts and Design (CVAD) Associate Professor of Art History Jennifer Way, the Terra Foundation for American Art Senior Fellow at the Smithsonian, who will be researching the “Politics of the Handmade: the Significance of Southeast Asian Handicraft for America, circa 1955–61.”

The [Terra Foundation for American Art](#) Fellowships promote an international dialogue on American art via the formulation and exchange of new ideas. The Foundation supports a variety of lectures, symposia, and scholarly publications through grants to institutions and supports individual scholarship by offering residencies, fellowships, and travel grants.

Way’s project explores the political and cultural significance of making, circulating, exhibiting, and consuming handicrafts as part of U.S-Vietnam relations during the Cold War years between the end of the first Indochina War and the early 1960s, when the Vietnam War began. Within this context, Way’s research will chronicle how modern design, art and visual and material culture shaped the meaning and significance of Southeast Asian handicrafts and handicraft artisans for Americans and Southeast Asians, and how these crafts shaped America’s perception of Vietnam.

Specifically, the research looks at the U.S. State Department’s International Cooperation Administration’s handicraft program active in Southeast Asia from 1955 to 1961. The I.C.A. promoted handicraft production as an export industry that would bring economic stability to the region. Way shows that American designers, craftsmen and artists who worked for the I.C.A. used examples of vanguard modern design and American art and visual and material culture to facilitate Vietnamese handicraft production abroad. These crafts were then represented to Westerners to facilitate consumption — to tourists in Saigon as well as in the U.S., such as Americans in the trade and business sectors, designers and artists, and upscale department stores and the middle classes. Way says, “My project seeks to demonstrate how designers, craftsmen and artists, in the ways they used design and art in the service of handicraft, allayed American anxieties about Southeast Asia by accommodating Vietnam to belong to what the U.S. thought of as the Free World and to American culture, markets, middle class homes, lifestyles and tastes.”

Way will use the Terra Foundation for American Art Senior Fellowship to study primary and secondary source materials in the libraries of the Renwick Gallery and Smithsonian American Art Museum, and in the libraries and archives of other Smithsonian organizations and additional institutions in Washington D.C. and the mid-Atlantic region, including the National Archives, National Portrait Gallery, Sackler/Freer Library and the Hagley Museum and Library at the University of Delaware. Her goal is to complete existing research and write a book proposal and the bulk of a book manuscript.

