



SARAH WATLINGTON IS AWARDED THE 2023 JOHN D. MINECK FURNITURE FELLOWSHIP

BOSTON -- OCT 25, 2023 -- Boston's Society of Arts + Crafts announced today that Sarah Watlington is the 2023 recipient of the prestigious John D. Mineck Fellowship, a nationally recognized award given annually to an early-career furniture artist with an unrestricted \$25,000 prize.



A Los Angeles-based woodworker, artist and educator who spent much of her life in San Diego, Watlington (*left*) holds a Bachelor of Fine Art degree from the Design Institute in San Diego and is a 2019 graduate of the Krenov School of Fine Woodworking ("College of the Redwoods") in Ft. Bragg, Calif.

She pursued interior design after high school, but felt her lack of fluency in construction and building materials was a barrier on job sites. "I determined if I knew how to build, I could more easily convey my ideas," Watlington says. "I started with rough carpentry in my early twenties – focusing on small structures to teach myself the skills – then moved into fine woodworking and furniture, which was a good challenge and a satisfying mix of design and construction."

A chance meeting led to a big opportunity. "I went to the library in Oakland and sat down with a pile of woodworking books," Watlington said, "when a man came up to me and essentially offered me a position on the spot." That was woodworker Trevor

Hadden, who offered Watlington a part-time apprenticeship in the foundations of woodworking, machine use and maintenance. From that experience, Watlington co-founded and ran a woodworking collective in Oakland that included a wood shop, printing facilities, auto shop and artist studios.

In 2016, Watlington moved to Los Angeles, connecting with Lee Kalliroi Buchanan at the Offerman Woodshop, eponymous woodshop of actor and woodworker Nick Offerman, where she served as Project Manager through 2023. In 2017, Watlington went on to hone her skills at the Krenov school, founded by renowned 20th century American furniture builder James Krenov, and says "that's when everything cracked wide open for me. I became totally engrossed in their pedagogy and obsessed with fine woodworking."

An unusual commission project in 2021 led Watlington down a new path, blending sound and sculpture with bespoke record players. “The record players began as a commission for a client and took me right to the center of a Venn Diagram of art, design, woodworking and audio. I think there’s a niche market to explore that combines all of my work,” she says. Watlington will use the Mineck Fellowship to expand her capacity by investing in appropriate studio tools and continuing her education in audio and electrical engineering, and large ceramic sculpture to develop a line of record players (*pictured right*) and mixed-media audio sculptures.



Watlington’s work and commitment to strengthening industry connections stood out to Society of Arts + Crafts Trustee and Fellowship juror **Miguel Gomez-Ibanez**. “Sarah demonstrates an ability to be productive as a designer and maker,” Gomez-Ibanez said. “‘Likelihood of future success’ is one of the criteria for selecting the award, and she was very strong in that regard. With her good work and her position in the field at this time, I think the award is just what she needs.”

Juror and 2020 Mineck Fellowship winner **Aspen Golann** is familiar with the impact the award may have on Watlington. “The Fellowship changed my life completely and made it possible both to develop my voice in the field, and make the change that I thought was needed,” she said. Golann was impressed with the depth of talent in this year’s applications and Watlington’s vision for the award. “Sarah is one of those rare people with advanced training in technical woodworking who is interested in applying that knowledge to something other than traditional practices.”

The John D. Mineck Furniture Fellowship is one of the largest such prizes in the craft field. It is supported by the Boston-based **John D. Mineck Foundation**, which honors interests that Mineck pursued throughout his life. The Fellowship focuses on rising furniture makers whose work is contemporary and functional, and supports young artists with financial assistance to develop skills that move them toward independence. The Society of Arts + Crafts, where Mineck once served as Board president, has administered the fellowship since it began in 2007.

For more than a century, the Society of Arts + Crafts has connected artists with communities that sustain them and has been at the forefront of the American craft movement, fostering the development, sales, recognition and education of fine craft. Its mission is to support and celebrate craft makers and their creativity; its vision is to build and sustain a vibrant and diverse community and to shape the future of craft. See the full mission [here](#).

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