**Florida CraftArt,** 501 Central Ave., St. Petersburg, FL 33701

727-821-7391 FloridaCraftArt.org

Contact: Katie Deits, Executive Director

For Immediate Release September 5, 2019

**Florida CraftArt presents:**

***Beautiful & Bizarre: Figurative Ceramics Invitational explores societal and gender issues***

**Exhibition Dates: August 23-October 20, 2019**

*Beautiful & Bizarre: Figurative Ceramics Invitational* is a curated show at Florida CraftArt featuring renowned ceramic artists who explore human and animal figures, along with fantastic beings that bridge the gap between the real and surreal. In the exhibition visitors will see 45 powerful sculptures by 24 artists from across America and one from Thailand.

Sarasota-based artist Taylor Robenalt, who is also an instructor at the Ringling College of Art, curated the exhibition about which she says, “In this time of difference and separation, top ceramic artists in this national exhibition created powerful sculptures that capture ideas, feelings, and emotions covering topics from mythology to political to playful. Artists come from diverse backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, races, and genders highlighting our contemporary world.”

**St. Petersburg artist Thaddeus (TJ) Erdahl and his wife Stephanie Stuefer use references of well-loved toys and obsolete artifacts to imply a history of these objects to encourage viewers to disconnect from the present situation and conjure their own individual narratives from his sculptures. TJ says, “Working with concepts that are personal and sometimes narcissistic perceptions of the gloomy side of life, dark humor is my buffer. Dry or irreverent, it is humor that mystifies the tragic.”**

**Molly Morning-glory’s studio is in Asheville, North Carolina. Her disjointed, colorful sculptures “bring to light experiences of otherness, isolation, insecurity, a desire to empathize, and a need for compassion,” she says. “The difficult reality of loneliness is offered in an upbeat pallet of color and pattern, helping to digest hard feelings.”**

**Benjie Heu is Professor of Ceramics at Southeast Missouri State University. He says that he employs richly textured surfaces to transform easily relatable and yet often overlooked anxieties of everyday life — the frailty of our bodies, the specter of chemical dependency, religious uncertainty, family dynamics, etc. — into figures or obstacles to be faced by the viewer.**

**G.V. Kelley is a Master of Fine Arts Candidate at University of Florida. Kelley’s work explores ideas about the potential of gender outside of the binary through references to Performance Art and Science Fiction.**

**Luke Huling is a figurative sculptor from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Two of his sculptures feature people with their heads sticking out of a zippered enclosure. He says, “I am interested in the way we as humans portray ourselves; the façade that is constructed to conceal our emotions and genuine thoughts. My work aims to grasp this feeling of suppression and detachment of emotions, and unmask these stressors, memories, or afflictions that we keep hidden from those around us.”**

*Beautiful & Bizarre* is a thought-provoking exhibition with diverse perspectives and creative programming.

**Mark Your Calendar for these events:**

**September 10, 5:30 p.m.** *Eggs & Skulls: Clothing Art from the ‘60s onward* in an adults-only performance by George Stovall

**September 28, 3 p.m**. Taylor Robenalt, Curator’s Talk

**September 28, 4 p.m.** Florida CraftArt Members’ meeting

**October 19, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.** Learn to create visual narratives in your work: Ceramic demo-workshop by Taylor Robenalt. Advance registration $50

**October 20, 4 p.m.** Poetry Potpourri: Playing Off the Beautiful and Bizarre with Poet Laureate Helen Pruitt Wallace and Friends

**October 20, 5 p.m.** Closing Reception and People’s Choice Awards

The exhibition and programming are made possible by Beth Morean, Barbara and Doug Demaire, Emily and Fred Gurtman, Gail Simpson & Associates, Jane and George Stovall, and Pinellas Community Foundation.

Florida CraftArt is located at 501 Central Avenue in St. Petersburg. For more information, visit [www.FloridaCraftArt.org](http://www.FloridaCraftArt.org) or call (727) 821-7391. Admission is **free**. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. Florida CraftArt is a nonprofit organization founded in 1951 and headquartered in St. Petersburg. Its mission is to grow the statewide creative economy by engaging the community and advancing Florida’s fine craft artists and their work. Fine craft art is presented in its 2,500-square-foot retail gallery and curated exhibitions are featured in its adjacent exhibition gallery. Florida CraftArt is the *only* statewide organization offering artists a platform to show and sell their work.

**CUTLINES (More images of work available on request. Photo and video opportunities available.)**

**George Stoval Art Clothes at Florida CraftArt** George Stovall will present “Eggs & Skulls: Clothing Art from the ‘60s onward” in an adults-only performance on September 10 at 5:30 p.m.

**Beautiful&Bizarre-Huling, Choi, Robinson 8175** Beautiful & Bizarre: Figurative Ceramics Invitational is on exhibit at Florida CraftArt through October 20. Sculptures pictured are from left by Luke Huling, Soojin Choi and David Robinson.

**Benjie Heu-#DMs and Likes** Benjie Heu, a Professor of Ceramics at Southeast Missouri State University, created “#DMs and Likes” by carving letters into his sculpture.

**Erdahl-St QueenyQuin** St. Petersburg artist TJ Erdahl sculpted a wall piece entitled “St. Queeny Quin.”

**Erdahl-Stuefer-Saint Amun-du-dun** TJ Erdahl and his wife Stephanie Stuefer partnered to create this Egyptian-like urn “Saint Amun-du-dun.”

**FCA-Beautiful&Bizarre-Gail Simpson, Taylor Robenalt 8118** Gail Simpson (on left) sponsored the exhibition and purchased a wall sculpture by the exhibition’s curator Taylor Robenalt (on right).

**GV Kelley Style:** GV Kelley’s work explores gender and identity issues in “Style.”

**\*Molly Morning-glory\_First with the Heart, then with the Head** Molly Morning-glory’s sculpture “First with the Heart, then with the Head” figures an abstracted person with multiple eyes and lips.

\*Please note that lowercase “g” is correct in Morning-glory. That is the way she spells her name.