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PRESS CONTACT:

Carolyn McDaniel

cmcdaniel@hancockshakervillage.org

413.443.0188 x221

**CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS RESPOND TO THE SHAKERS
IN A SERIES OF NEW INSTALLATIONS
OPENING MAY 31, 2021 AT HANCOCK SHAKER VILLAGE**

PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS, May 13, 2021 – Influenced by Shaker style and aesthetic, four unique and prominent artists and designers will be featured in upcoming installations at Hancock Shaker Village, home of one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Shaker material culture in the world. Opening **May 31, 2021** are American fashion designer **Tory Burch** and artist/designer **Gary Graham**; opening **June 25, 2021** are textile artist **Laura Sansone**, and sculptor **Thomas Barger**. These installations are simultaneous with the previously announced opening of **James Turrell & Nicholas Mosse: Lapsed Quaker Ware**. More information about this exhibition found [HERE](#).

More than 250 years after a tiny group calling themselves Shakers sought refuge on American shores, their architecture and furniture continues to exert a powerful influence on artists and designers. From Donald Judd’s daybed to Virgil Abloh’s Markerad chair for Ikea, the enduring influence is evident where you least expect it. “Since the 18th century, Shakers have designed and made architecture, furniture, garments, and tools that continue as touchstones of American vernacular design, said Jennifer Trainer Thompson, Director of Hancock Shaker Village. “We are delighted to welcome artists to the Village this summer who draw inspiration from the Shaker aesthetic, and explore their influence in this historic context in surprising ways.”

One of the most influential fashion designers today, **Tory Burch** is inspired by American craftsmanship, particularly the Shakers’ purposeful design philosophy and joyful approach to color. In Room 16 of the Brick Dwelling, Beauty Rests on Utility reveals the influence of Shaker design on her Spring/Summer 2021 collection and celebrates Shaker innovation, utility and aesthetic refinement, embodied even with the simplest domestic items – brooms, baskets, boxes. Drawn to the salmon, marigold and white facades of Hancock’s buildings and to handcrafted Shaker wooden chairs and woven baskets, Burch curates her Shaker favorites alongside pieces from her collection. During the challenges of 2020, Burch and her team used their imagination to find new ways to connect – emerging with a renewed interest in restraint, simplicity, and creativity. Tory was inspired by memories and purposeful craftsmanship – classrooms at her Quaker elementary school, baskets that hung at her family’s farm, handmade quilts she found in Pennsylvania Dutch country – Burch was struck by the Shaker maxim beauty rests on utility. In this installation, visitors will find Shaker objects from the museum's

permanent collection juxtaposed with hand-woven shoes and handbags, basket-weave embroidery and pieces that are easy to wear, uncomplicated and beautifully made. **Opening May 31.**

In the serene corner Room 17 of the 1830 Brick Dwelling, history-loving designer storyteller **Gary Graham** is inspired by material culture that blend fictional characters with historical narratives. In this installation and video *Looking Back to Look Forward* (**also opening May 31**), Graham blurs distinctions between past, present and future, with new site-specific work that forms a creative approach to the tactile and sensual attributes of textiles stirred with the drama of contemporary historical interpretation. Using historical fabrics and historic textile production methods, Graham engages with history as a present lived experience. Collaborating with Thistle Hill Weavers, a textile studio specializing in 17th, 18th, and 19th century reproductions, he spent the winter making a cloak inspired by the iconic red Shaker cloak, one of many garments made by the Hancock Shaker community in the early 1800s. In this new work, Graham recreates his cocoon-shaped coat in such a way that calls to mind questions we grapple with today – “what is the purpose and the nature of our work and how can we mindfully organize our workspaces to be fruitful to that end?” His accompanying film – shot in the Round Stone Barn in a way as to call to mind a 19th century cathedral of light and wood -- reimagines the Shaker cloak coming back to life, personifying the nature of the Shakers’ work ethic in Graham’s service.

In the 1878 Brick Poultry House, **Laura Sansone** will illuminate the Shakers’ dedication to sustainability in a fiber exhibition that tracks the process of transforming raw wool from merino sheep on the Shaker farm into finished knitted garments. Interweaving the story of the Shakers, and their history with farming and textile production, Sansone and other Hudson Valley textile designers made garments with wool from merino sheep raised at the Shaker Village, creating a narrative that blends historic Shaker tools and weaving equipment with modern artisanal processes that demonstrate the importance of fiber sheds, carbon farming, and the social connectivity found through craft and textile making, and a resilient textile system. **Opening June 25**, this ranch-to-runway approach highlights the resilience of regional fibersheds and the movement of regional slow fashion. (The building’s sturdy construction, by the way, is a testament to the importance of animals, in this case poultry, among the Shakers’ agricultural endeavors, and a fine example of the Shakers’ use of passive solar gain in their architecture. The large number of south-facing windows warm the building naturally. The additional light helped to combat what would typically be slow egg production during winter months. Apple trees were planted strategically along the southern side of the building, providing shade during the hottest months and letting sunlight through their bare branches in winter.)

In the last of this series of artists and designers inspired by the ethos and creative genius of the Shakers, **Thomas Barger** will be returning to Hancock Shaker Village after several fact-finding missions with his installation of a deconstructed Shaker chair. On view in the Trustees’ Office **beginning June 25**, Barger began working on the sculpture in his Brooklyn studio a year and a

half ago. Known for upcycling found materials to create whimsical pieces of sculptural furniture, Barger is using Shaker components to create two new chairs for this exhibition, a mashup of architecture, laundry shoots, and Shaker furniture. Barger's work will be presented alongside period rooms with Victorian embellishments added at the turn of the 20th-century, a reflection on some misconceptions regarding Shaker design. "What is important to me isn't so much the design aspect of the work," said Barger, "but highlighting the relationships I find significant in my life. I'm more excited about sharing a story than making a chair." Intrigued by the function and deconstruction of furniture, Barger's work blends sculptural forms and furniture parts to create something entirely novel. It was in the Trustees' Office that "The World" met the Shakers – visitors could order goods in the store, and sightseers bought souvenirs. Guests of the Shakers also dined and lodged in this building.

"Design is about how something looks and feels, but it is also about our emotional response to an object," said Thompson. "While we greatly admire their innovative social ideologies and sense of community, it is their architecture and design that remains, a tangible indicator of their ideology and values. If working hard is a form of prayer ("hands to work hearts to God," Mother Ann said), it's evident in everything they made was a breathtaking mix of design and craft, love and divine intervention. The legacy of the Shaker aesthetic lives within the contemporary artists and designers who carry forward this inspiration in their hearts and work."

One of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Shaker material culture in the world, Hancock Shaker Village's collection includes 22,000 objects ranging from trestle tables, candle stands, cabinets, and oval boxes, to lesser-known prototypes, tools, and domestic objects. The Shaker objects on display in these installations are selected for their significance within the overall canon of Shaker design, as well as for their ability to suggest insights into the lives and beliefs of the Shakers.

About the artists

Tory Burch (b. 1966) is an American fashion designer, and the Executive Chairman and Chief Creative Officer of Tory Burch. She launched the company in 2004 with a boutique in New York City and an ecommerce site. The brand has since grown into a global business with boutiques from New York to Paris and Shanghai. In 2015, she launched Tory Sport, a performance active wear collection that balances cutting-edge functionality with classic design. Social responsibility has been a part of the company from its inception. In 2009, she launched the [Tory Burch Foundation](#) to advance women's empowerment and entrepreneurship in the United States by providing access to capital, education and digital resources, as well as a Fellowship program.

Gary Graham (b. 1969) Graham is an artist who approaches fashion design as a material culture of elegance and decay. Upon graduating with a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, he began working for artist and designer J. Morgan Puett, learning the craft of garment dyeing and less formal approaches to textiles and historical interpretation. In 1999 he

designed his first collection and in 2009 Graham was honored as a CFDA/Vogue finalist. Working with museums ranging from The Peabody Essex Museum to The American Folk Art Museum and RISD Museum, Graham mines museological archives for inspiration in installations and performances that explore history as a living experience. In *The Conversation* presented in 2015, he collaborated with artist Meredith Monk to recast her iconic 1979 recording *Bird Code* within an installation of historic furniture and textiles. In 2017, Graham worked with the Rhode Island Historical Society and Pollack Associates to design a textile collection inspired by three locales, showcasing the work with an installation of furniture, video, performance and sound.

Laura Sansone (b 1968) is a textile designer and activist and the creator of Textile Lab, an ongoing project that examines environmentally responsible textile methods, and community based systems of production. On the faculty of Parsons School of Design, her work has been exhibited at the 5th Annual Artisterium Contemporary Art Exhibition and Art Events, Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia; SJDC Aronson Gallery, NY; Dumbo Arts Festival, NY; Cranbrook Museum; Sonoma Museum of Visual Art; and Exit Art, NY. Her publications include contributions to *Fibershed: Growing a Movement of Farmers, Fashion Activists, and Makers for a New Textile Economy* by Rebecca Burgess, *Design and Nature: A Partnership* by Kate Fletcher, Louise St. Pierre and Mathilda Tham, *Exploring Materials/Creative Design For Everyday Objects* by Ellen Lupton, *Hot House/ Expanding the Field of Fiber at Cranbrook* by Gregory Wittkopp. *Map Magazine*, *Perspective Magazine*, *TeenVogue*, and *Bomb Magazine*. Laura received a BFA with a concentration in fiber from the University of The Arts and an MFA with a concentration in fiber from Cranbrook Academy of Art

Thomas Barger (b 1992) is a Brooklyn-based artist who grew up on a cattle farm in Illinois. Like many transplants, his move to New York City was motivated by necessity. Barger came to New York in order to access his own homosexual identity at a distance from his rural, conservative, religious background. Amidst this new chosen environment, Barger's work has been a process of emotional, intellectual, and spiritual exploration grounded in craft, narrative, and humor. Thomas Barger studied architecture and landscape architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Recognized as a rising star in a new wave in collectible design, his work has intrigued viewers from *Architectural Digest* to *Design Miami*. His furniture has been exhibited in Seoul by Salon 94 Design.

On view through November 28, 2021. Located in Pittsfield, MA, Hancock Shaker Village is open daily from 11am to 4 pm. Hours beginning July 1 are 10am – 5 pm. Admission is \$20/adults (\$18 for seniors, AAA members, MTA cardholders, and active and retired US military), \$8 youth (ages 13-17), and FREE for children 12 and under, courtesy of Berkshire Bank. Members are always admitted free year-round. Go to HancockShakerVillage.org for more information.

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ABOUT HANCOCK SHAKER VILLAGE

Hancock Shaker Village, a living history museum on 750 acres in the heart of the Berkshires, is located at 1843 West Housatonic Street, Pittsfield, MA. A National Historic Landmark, the property includes twenty historic Shaker buildings dating back to 1783, and the oldest working farm in the Berkshires with heritage breeds and heirloom gardens. The museum is home to more than 22,000 artifacts including furniture, textiles, hymnals, and everyday goods, making it one of the premier Shaker collections in the world.

The Shakers settled in the Berkshires in 1780, building a vast village that extended over the towns of Hancock, Pittsfield, and Richmond in Western Massachusetts. They called the village the City of Peace and created a value-driven communal society that nurtured goals as far-ranging as gender and racial equality, social reform, sustainability, innovation, and pacifism. Their buildings, furniture, and artifacts emphasize Shaker attitudes toward honesty, utility, and design, and remain a lasting legacy for us today and into the future. The Shakers' influence on American history extends far beyond their relatively small numbers. This influence lives on at Hancock Shaker Village, and manifests in the buildings and artifacts we steward, the exhibitions we present, and our programs that tell a story rooted in the fertile soil of history, imagination, dedication, and beauty. Simply stated, Hancock Shaker Village exists to provide an historic context to the Shaker story, to preserve the site and all it contains for future generations, and to bring this narrative to life in compelling ways.