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**AMERICAN CRAFT COUNCIL ANNOUNCES FINALISTS**  
2017 Rare Craft Fellowship Award in association with The Balvenie



*2017 Rare Craft Fellowship Award finalists (from left to right, top to bottom): Emily Nachison, Apparition, 2016; Wence and Sandra Martinez, Flora, 2015; Ali Sandifer, Magdalene, 2014; Amara Hark-Weber, booties, 2016; Janice Arnold, Entrance Arch-Palace Yurt, 2014*

**Minneapolis, MN – February 6, 2017** – The American Craft Council is pleased to announce the finalists for the 2017 Rare Craft Fellowship Award in association with The Balvenie.

- Abir Ali and Andre Sandifer, furniture makers
- Janice Arnold, textiles
- Amara Hark-Weber, shoemaker
- Sandra and Wence Martinez, painter and weaver (respectively)
- Emily Nachison, glass and installation

The Rare Craft Fellowship Award in association with The Balvenie is presented in recognition and support of contributions to the maintenance and revival of traditional or rare crafts in America. The award is supported by The Balvenie single malt Scotch whisky. The winner will be announced at an awards ceremony held in New York City on April 18.

This year's jurors were Anthony Bourdain, author, chef, and raconteur; Michael Radyk, ACC director of education; David Stewart, The Balvenie's malt master; and Jennifer Zwilling, curator of artistic programs at the Clay Studio in Philadelphia.

Past fellowship winners include boat builder Douglas Brooks (2014), bladesmith Bob Kramer (2015), and paper folders Martin and Erik Demaine (2016).

### **About the American Craft Council**

No one understands the world of artful living better than the American Craft Council. The national, nonprofit educational organization has been shaping the artisanal craft movement for decades, serving as a craft chronicler, tastemaker, convener, and provocateur through its magazine *American Craft*, annual juried shows presenting artists and their work, thought leadership conferences, awards for excellence, and research library. For further information, visit [craftcouncil.org](http://craftcouncil.org).

### **About the finalists:**

#### **Abir Ali and Andre Sandifer, Detroit, Michigan**

Ali Sandifer is a design studio and workshop led by the husband-and-wife team of Abir Ali and Andre Sandifer. Each Ali Sandifer piece is made to order and crafted in their studio in Detroit. In an era of mass production and disposable furniture, Ali Sandifer creates pieces to be passed down from one generation to the next. Abir and Andre design and craft each piece so that their work endures, and they strive for a timeless quality that allows the work to become part of their clients' families for generations.

#### **Janice Arnold, Olympia, Washington**

Janice Arnold is an artist and tenacious explorer with an insatiable curiosity for textile traditions. She has made it her life's work to study ethnographic textiles. In 1999 Janice started exploring wool and felt as part of a sculpture commission. Even though feltmaking is becoming more popular, knowledge of the traditional processes, historical significance, and ritual rooted in large-scale, community-based feltmaking is rare. It has become Janice's passion to revive this critical part of history and bring awareness and understanding to these ancient techniques through art and education.

#### **Amara Hark-Weber, St. Paul, Minnesota**

Amara Hark-Weber is a cordwainer, making bespoke shoes and boots in her one-woman shop. She also teaches shoemaking workshops at craft schools and intensive courses to individuals. Her practice includes several styles of making, from cowboy boots to hand-sewn dress shoes. Shoemaking is a craft in which slowness and solitude are necessary, and in which mastery takes a lifetime. This pacing is unusual and requires philosophical, time, and material commitments, which Hark-Weber makes each time she goes to work.

**Sandra and Wence Martinez, Jacksonport, Wisconsin**

Collaborators for nearly 30 years, Wence and Sandra Martinez met through their artwork. Wence weaves his pattern-driven designs, and Sandra paints symbolist imagery, resulting in weavings executed by Wence and their apprentices. Born storytellers, the Martinezes love people and the cultural bridges they build with folks who may have never seen weaving or realized that Mexico has a rich and diverse indigenous craft heritage.

**Emily Nachison, Portland, Oregon**

Through sculptural objects and installation, Emily Nachison investigates the use of story and symbols to mythologize the natural world. She uses a range of materials including glass, steel, hair, and leather. Glass represents preservation while simultaneously signifying fragility and impermanence. In Emily's work, this duality is emphasized by the organic forms she casts in glass and draws upon the countless fairytales and stories that explain natural occurrences as myths.

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