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Houston-Based Artist Joseph Havel’s Newest Work to be Shown at Asia Society

New bronze works created in response to
Eternal Offerings: Chinese Ritual Bronzes currently on view



Joe Havel, 2020, “Ewer,” bronze with patina; Joe Havel, 2020, “Joss,” bronze with patina;
 Joe Havel, 2020, “Tap,” bronze with patina

HOUSTON, August 24, 2020 – Asia Society Texas Center (ASTC) opens its newest exhibition, **Joss**, on **Saturday, August 29**, highlighting the work of Houston- and San Francisco-based artist, **Joseph Havel**. With objects in the collections of local institutions such as the Menil Collection and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Havel is renowned for his work with bronze as a medium. He has created a series of new sculptures in response to the ancient bronze vessels currently featured in ASTC’s *Eternal Offerings: Chinese Ritual Bronzes*, on special loan from the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Havel first encountered the Chinese bronzes featured in *Eternal Offerings*, as a college student at the University of Minnesota. The memory of those visits to the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA), and learning about the intricate use of bronze exhibited in these ancient pieces, made an enduring impact on Havel and provided inspiration for the creation of his newest sculptures centered on forms of joss paper.

“Joseph Havel’s long focus on sculpting in bronze and his technical accomplishments in the field have made striking innovations in form and surfaces. His ability to capture the finest textural details of fragile materials such as fabric and paper is unparalleled. When we knew we would be hosting the MIA bronzes in a special loan exhibition, we saw the opportunity for Havel to reconnect with these works that made such an impression on him at the beginning of his career as an artist, and have informed his understanding of bronze as a medium,” explains **Bridget Bray**, ASTC’s Nancy C. Allen Curator and Director of Exhibitions.



The artist, who splits his time between Houston and a residence near Stockton Street in San Francisco, began to research joss paper and its myriad forms. Also known as spirit money, joss paper is burned as an offering to ancestors and transformed into smoke that carries its value into the spirit world. In the same manner the ancient bronzes showcased in *Eternal Offerings* were used to extend food and wine to the dead, contemporary joss paper – available in a variety of shapes to replicate everything from daily necessities such as money, clothing and food, to more modern luxury items like jewelry, phones, and flat screen TVs – provides a connection between generations.

Havel's sculptures are constructed using the paper forms of household goods and clothing, focusing on joss's unique function and physicality to determine the compositions, then casting them in bronze. The joss is burnt out in the casting process, transformed from delicate paper into a more lasting construction that brings forward questions of ephemerality and permanence, consumption and preservation. Embodying Asia Society's mission to foster cross-cultural dialogues, the conversation created by the simultaneous display of *Joss* and *Eternal Offerings* highlights the lasting influence early Chinese art forms and techniques continue to have on contemporary artists.

In order to position these new sculptures in Havel's larger body of work, an earlier work *Pollen* (1993) is included in the exhibition, which was also cast from paper but in this case from a pair of paper umbrellas, demonstrating his early interest in the potential of translation between the two mediums. More recent works developed in partnership with Havel's parrot, Hannah, will also be featured.

In celebration of the opening of the exhibition, ASTC will present a **web-based artist talk** and studio tour with the artist on **Saturday, August 29, at 2pm**. Havel will discuss his process and technical approaches to the bronze, with particular attention to the similarities and differences between his methods and those embodied in the ancient ritual vessels in the concurrent exhibition on view, *Eternal Offerings: Chinese Ritual Bronzes*.

Exhibition Fast Facts

- Exhibition dates: Saturday, August 29, 2020–Sunday, November 8, 2020
- Admission: Free
- Hours: Thursday–Friday, 11am – 4pm; Saturday–Sunday, 10am – 4pm
- Location: Asia Society Texas Center, 1370 Southmore Blvd, Houston, TX, 77004 (in the Museum District)
- More info: asiasociety.org/texas/exhibitions/joss-works-joseph-havel

Webcast Artist Talk and Studio Tour Fast Facts:

- Webcast date: Saturday, August 29 at 2pm with audience Q&A beginning at 2:45pm
- Admission: Free
- Where to watch: [Live on You Tube](#) and [Live on Facebook](#):
- More info: asiasociety.org/texas/events/webcast-studio-visit-joseph-havel



About the Artist

Joseph Havel (b. Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1954) is a sculptor working in materials such as bronze, resin, paper, and textile. The artist is based in Houston and San Francisco, and domestic routines in both cities play heavily in his work. Havel received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1976 from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN and a Masters of Fine Arts degree in 1979 from Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. His work has been exhibited widely in the United States and Europe, and is in the collections of many museums, including the Centre Pompidou, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Menil Collection, and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Havel has served as Director of the Glassell School of Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston since 1991.

About Asia Society Texas Center

With 14 locations throughout the world, Asia Society is the leading educational organization promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among the peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the rest of the world. Asia Society Texas Center executes the global mission with a local focus, enriching and engaging the vast diversity of Houston through innovative, relevant programs in arts and culture, business and policy, education, and community outreach.

Joss: Works by Joseph Havel is organized by Asia Society Texas Center.

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