

COOPER HEWITT

2 E 91ST STREET
NEW YORK NY 10128
COOPERHEWITT.ORG

MEDIA ONLY

GREGORY GESTNER
212.849.8360
GESTNERG@SI.EDU

LAURIE BOHLK
212.849.8420
BOHLKL@SI.EDU

SI-163-2017

COOPER HEWITT PRESENTS EXHIBITION GUEST-CURATED BY ESPERANZA SPALDING

ON VIEW JUNE 9–JAN. 7, 2018

APRIL 6, 2017

As guest curator of the next exhibition in Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum's "Selects" series, musician and four-time Grammy Award-winner Esperanza Spalding has lent her creative vision to shed light on the museum's collection. On view June 9 through Jan. 7, 2018, in the Nancy and Edwin Marks Collection Gallery, "Esperanza Spalding Selects" is the 15th installation in the series in which designers, artists, architects and public figures are invited to examine and interpret the museum's collection of more than 210,000 objects. For her presentation, Spalding has created thought-provoking juxtapositions among objects to show how material evolves into different forms as new designers adapt it for their own locales and cultural functions.

"Esperanza thinks boldly and deeply about design, music and culture," said Caroline Baumann, director of Cooper Hewitt. "As a musician and composer committed to exploring uncharted creative territories, she approached our collection with the same spirit of intellectual inquiry and artistic open-mindedness. Willing to challenge conventional interpretations and histories, Esperanza has created a provocative dialogue among her selected objects, from Hemmerle's 'Egyptian Story' bracelet to a book designed by Paul Poiret."

Spalding has organized nearly 50 objects—encompassing drawings, prints, textiles, jewelry and product design—into eight groupings around themes related to evolution and transformation. The groupings include: "Evolving Perspectives on Integration," which presents a selection of sheet music covers that show the progression of changing cultural sensitivities toward race; "Devolve to Evolve," examining the design process behind objects such as a Japanese purse made from deconstructed wall panels from Holland that were later used to line shipping boxes; and "Evolving Beyond Functionality," which includes a drawing by American designer and artist John De Cesare, who experimented with the traditional structure of musical scores to create a visual representation of the experience of music.

"Studying the history of these objects, I've learned that design grows in response to the same essential forces of breaking down and building up that inform all innovation," said Spalding. "I wanted to emphasize that the eternal process of devolution and evolution actually works in a continuous loop, with no real beginning or ending."

A native of Portland, Ore., Spalding has enlisted hometown collaborators Megan McGeorge, of the nonprofit "Piano, Push, Play," and Robert Petty, of ZGF Architects, for a special installation in the gallery. Conceived as an extension of the work on view, the installation consists of deconstructed pianos, which respond to the theme of transformation.



In addition, Spalding has recorded original music for the exhibition with Argentine musician and composer Leonardo Genovese, which will play in the gallery. The four sections of music include a classic performance of sheet music from the exhibition, an improvised interpretation of the same song, a variation for bass and voice and finally, a “re-arrangement” of these recordings electronically sequenced into a new composition.

Leading up to the exhibition opening, Spalding will participate in two programs at the museum. On Wednesday, June 7, she will engage in a moderated discussion on the role of improvisation in the creative process. On Thursday, June 8, to kick off Cocktails at Cooper Hewitt, the summer performance series in the Arthur Ross Terrace and Garden, Spalding will introduce Genovese (performing as Mezcalitos), multi-instrumentalist quartet Rose and the Nightingale, and singer-songwriter Nadia Washington.

“Esperanza Spalding Selects” is made possible by the Marks Family Foundation Endowment Fund. In-kind support for the site-specific installation is provided by ZGF Architects. Piano provided by Steinway & Sons.

ABOUT ESPERANZA SPALDING

Spalding began studying violin and bass in her youth, attaining the role of concertmaster of the Chamber Music Society of Oregon in Portland before attending Berklee College of Music. She released the acclaimed albums *Junjo*, *Esperanza* and *Chamber Music Society* before winning a 2011 Grammy for Best New Artist, the first jazz musician to do so, for *The Mosaic Project*.

Spalding’s affiliation with the Smithsonian dates back to 2012, when she donated the dress she wore for her performance at President Barack Obama’s 2011 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony to the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. Later that year, she won the *Smithsonian* magazine’s American Ingenuity Award for Performing Arts, and in 2014, the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. commissioned artist Bo Gehring to create a video portrait of her, which was presented at the museum in 2015.

Spalding has collaborated with renowned jazz musicians, including Patti Austin, Michael Camilo, Quintino Cinalli, Herbie Hancock, Bobby McFerrin and Pat Metheny, as well as Stevie Wonder, Janelle Monae and Prince. In March 2016, Spalding released her fifth album, *Emily’s D+Evolution*. Coproduced by Spalding and Tony Visconti, the experimental work is accompanied by striking album imagery and vibrantly designed performances.

ABOUT COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM

Founded in 1897, Cooper Hewitt is the only museum in the United States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design. Housed in the renovated and restored Carnegie Mansion, Cooper Hewitt showcases one of the most diverse and comprehensive collections of design works in existence. The museum’s restoration, modernization and expansion has won numerous awards and honors, including a Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy, a Gold Pencil Award for Best in Responsive Environments and LEED Silver certification. Cooper Hewitt offers a full range of interactive capabilities and immersive creative experiences, including the Cooper Hewitt Pen



COOPER HEWITT

that allows visitors to “collect” and “save” objects from around the galleries, the opportunity to explore the collection digitally on ultra-high-definition touch-screen tables, and draw and project their own wallpaper designs in the Immersion Room.

Cooper Hewitt is located at 2 East 91st Street at Fifth Avenue in New York City. Hours are Sunday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. The Arthur Ross Terrace and Garden and Tarallucci e Vino cafe open at 8 a.m., Monday through Friday, and are accessible without an admissions ticket through the East 90th Street entrance. The museum is closed on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Public transit routes include the Lexington Avenue 4, 5 and 6 subways (86th or 96th Street stations), the Second Avenue Q subway (96th Street station), and the Fifth and Madison Avenue buses. Adult admission, \$16 in advance via tickets.cooperhewitt.org, \$18 at door; seniors, \$10 in advance via tickets.cooperhewitt.org, \$12 at door; students, \$7 in advance via tickets.cooperhewitt.org, \$9 at door. Cooper Hewitt members and children younger than age 18 are admitted free. Pay What You Wish every Saturday, 6 to 9 p.m. The museum is fully accessible.

For further information, call (212) 849-8400, visit Cooper Hewitt’s website at www.cooperhewitt.org and follow the museum on www.twitter.com/cooperhewitt, www.facebook.com/cooperhewitt and www.instagram.com/cooperhewitt.

###

