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COOPER HEWITT DIRECTOR CAROLINE BAUMANN AWARDED THE INSIGNIA OF CHEVALIER OF THE ORDER OF ARTS AND LETTERS

MARCH 8, 2018

Caroline Baumann, Director of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, received the insignia of Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters by Bénédicte de Montlaur, Cultural Counselor of the French Embassy, at a ceremony in New York on March 5. Baumann received this distinction in recognition of her significant contributions to the fields of art and design. Also honored at the ceremony were Brett Littman, incoming director of the Noguchi Museum, and Andres Serrano, artist and photographer.

The Order of Arts and Letters (Ordre des Arts et des Lettres) was established in 1957 to recognize eminent artists and writers, as well as people who have contributed significantly to furthering the arts in France and throughout the world. The Order of Arts and Letters is given out three times annually under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Culture and Communication.

“Caroline Baumann has done a remarkable job making art and design more accessible at both a local and international level,” said de Montlaur. “Not only has she been essential in developing interactive exhibitions and digital technologies of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York City, she has also expanded the museum’s vision by developing global partnerships, reaching broader audiences on all fronts.”

“I am immensely honored to join the Order of Arts and Letters,” said Baumann. “France is personally very important to me, as my birthplace and a source of tremendous inspiration since childhood. At Cooper Hewitt, I’m proud to champion the mission of Sarah and Eleanor Hewitt, the sisters who founded this collection in 1897 and who acquired many of the museum’s most cherished items during annual months-long visits to France. The collection they began now includes over 35,000 French objects – more than one-sixth of our entire holdings – and the museum’s galleries are a daily testament to French ingenuity in design and the decorative arts. Vive la France!”

Baumann spearheaded Cooper Hewitt’s most ambitious capital campaign to date, which raised nearly \$91 million, and led the recent renovation and expansion of the museum’s home in the historic landmark Carnegie Mansion, transforming America’s design museum into a dynamic, global resource for the public understanding of design. The reimagined Cooper Hewitt features exhibitions that travel the world; groundbreaking interactive museum technologies; a free national design education program for students K-12; a 36-year partnership with Parsons School of Design for a master’s program in the history of design and curatorial studies; and a permanent collection of 210,000 design objects that are digitized and available on the museum’s website.

Inspired by the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Cooper Hewitt's founders, Sarah and Eleanor Hewitt, established the museum in 1897 for the study of design and appreciation of the decorative arts. The Hewitt sisters endowed it with a collection largely acquired in Paris, international in scope, and primarily centered on historic French design. Cooper Hewitt's holdings include more than 35,000 French design objects, from an extraordinary surtout de table by the great ormolu specialist and sculptor Pierre-Philippe Thomire to superb contemporary industrial and graphic design by Philippe Apeloig, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec and Patrick Jouin. Cooper Hewitt exhibitions have highlighted the designs of Van Cleef & Arpels, Sonia Delauney, Lalique, Paris Opera design and a forthcoming exhibition will focus on the work of Hector Guimard.

Presently on view in the galleries is "Moustiers Ceramics: Gifts from the Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Collection," showcasing nearly 60 works of faience alongside related prints and textiles, and an installation of 18th- and 19th-century staircase models, representing a range of design styles and techniques. In May, the museum will open "Saturated: The Allure and Science of Color," which showcases more than 20 French works, including Michel Eugène Chevreul's 1839 book that presents the first color system to include brightness and chroma.

A Swiss-American born in Paris, Baumann is a member of the Applied Arts and Design Museum Network, the Royal College of Art USA Board, the NYCxDesign Steering Committee, the Dwell On Design New York Advisory Board and an honorary committee member for Salon Art + Design.

Baumann earned a master's degree in medieval art from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts and a bachelor's degree in art history and French literature from Bates College. She also attended La Sorbonne and L'École du Louvre. Baumann resides on the Upper West Side of Manhattan with her partner and son.

A video of the conferral ceremony in its entirety may be viewed at the following link:
<https://youtu.be/Vgjep6lhYaU>

ABOUT COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM

Housed in the historic landmark Carnegie Mansion in New York City, Cooper Hewitt is the only museum in the United States devoted exclusively to historical and contemporary design. With a mission to educate, inspire and empower people through design, Cooper Hewitt's special exhibitions and educational programs tell design's story, raise awareness of design's universal value and demonstrate design's power to make a difference. For more information, visit cooperhewitt.org.

ABOUT THE CULTURAL SERVICES OF THE FRENCH EMBASSY

The Cultural Services of the French Embassy promotes the best of French arts, literature, cinema, language and higher education across the U.S. Based in New York City, Washington, D.C. and eight other cities across the country, the Cultural Services brings artists, authors, educational and university programs to cities nationwide. It also builds partnership between French and American artists, institutions and universities on both sides of the Atlantic. In New

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York, through its bookshop, Albertine, it fosters French American exchange around literature and the arts.

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