

Craft Service

| By Tiffany Jow |

The Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery hasn't held much hipster appeal lately—that is, until now. In honor of its 40th anniversary, the decorative arts museum is set to blast traditional notions of craft out of the past and into the future. The radical result is **40 Under 40**, an exhibition of 40 innovators spanning industrial design, fashion, science and sculpture, all curated by Nicholas Bell and opening July 20. We highlight five talents not to miss.



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COVERING THE SPECTRUM

1. Taking yarn-bombing to the extreme, Olek upholstered her whole studio apartment. 2. To make her psychedelic sculptures, Jen Stark uses a pencil, ruler, X-acto knife and occasionally a compass. 3. Many of Jenny Hart's whimsical stitchings come from customer requests. 4. Shawn Smith considers building each sculpture akin to a mini-marathon, most taking nearly a month to complete. 5. The "Curtains and Balcony Bangle" (pictured) by Joshua DeMonte is made from nylon in a process called laser sintering, which a laser fuses a given material together to form a solid object.

1. Olek

Yarn-bombing—think graffiti by knitting—is big, but Poland-born, Brooklyn-based artist Olek makes it better. Moving beyond the parking meters, trees and streetlights that are frequent victims of the movement, Olek covers entire environments in trippy cameo-patterned crochet (Wall Street's bull and Lower East Side building walls, to name a few). She's used her signature surreal, texture-packed vision to transform a teepee in Wales, a taxi in London and even her own apartment, which will be on view at the Renwick. agataolek.com

2. Jen Stark

When L.A.-based Jen Stark was studying abroad for a semester in France eight years ago, a poor exchange rate prompted her to troll art stores for the cheapest materials she could find. "I stumbled upon a \$2 stack of construction paper and began experimenting in my studio," she says. Suddenly, a new form of sculpture was born. Her fantastical 3-D orifices of layered colored paper pour out of—or burrow into—the walls on which they're mounted, eliciting a refreshing punch of joy, despite their simplicity. jenstark.com

3. Jenny Hart

"Embroidery had been nothing but teddy bears and bunnies for decades," says Jenny Hart. "So I began making patterns I thought would stir things up and make it interesting again." Now, her whimsical stitched portraits of the likes of Iggy Pop and his ilk grace the pages of *Vogue*, *Nylon* and *Rolling Stone*. Her design company, Sublime Stitching, has promptly wrangled a colossal following. "I continually work to keep things fresh and alternative," says the artist from her studio in L.A. "Otherwise, pinups, tattoos and robots would be the new norm!" jennyhart.net

4. Shawn Smith

Having lived in urban environments his whole life, the Austin-based Shawn Smith claims to have little experience with nature. "All I know about the natural world is learned through a screen of some kind," he says. He mixes the influence of technology and his sculpture prowess into works of art made of wood, plastic or stainless steel from magnified images that he finds predominately through Google Images. Smith searches objects he hasn't seen in person, lowers the resolution, then translates it into a masterpiece, pixel by pixel. shawnsmithart.com

5. Joshua Demonte

This art professor at Towson University in Baltimore is just one more who combines tech and the handmade to create something spectacular. Joshua DeMonte's outsize pieces of jewelry, extruded from a 3-D printer, fuse ancient architectural elements with traditional jewelry embellishments. He constructs bracelets based on classical cathedrals or necklaces that mimic aqueducts and corniced rooflines. "I enjoy playing with scale and connecting architecture to the body in ways that relate the wearer to both adornment and architectural space," he says. joshuademonte.com