

## **A brief history of the Smithsonian Women's Committee and the Smithsonian Craft Show**

The Smithsonian Women's Committee (SWC) is a volunteer organization founded in 1966 to promote the Smithsonian through advocacy and grants, in its mission to increase and diffuse knowledge. Since its founding by Mary Ripley, wife of Smithsonian Secretary S. Dillon Ripley (Secretary of the Institution 1964-1984), the SWC has supported the Smithsonian with grant awards and endowments totaling more than \$10 million.

Through a rigorous grants process within the Smithsonian complex of 19 museums and galleries, scientific facilities, libraries, and the National Zoo, the SWC funds projects that open knowledge, adventure and discovery to the world. Grant funds are raised primarily by SWC's signature events: the Smithsonian Craft Show and Craft2Wear.

The annual Smithsonian Craft Show began in 1983 when craft exhibitions were a rarity in Washington and is now widely regarded as the nation's premier juried show and sale of fine American crafts. Each year a new jury of three experts brings a fresh perspective to selecting exhibitors for that year's show. No artist is automatically invited back; all previous exhibitors must reapply and be evaluated by the jury. As a result, each new show is different from previous shows, and is always an exciting presentation of excellence in American craft. The Committee's newest event, Craft2Wear, was begun in 2005. It is a fall sale of jewelry and wearable art featuring exhibitors who have been juried into at least one previous Smithsonian Craft Show.

Now in its 47th year, the SWC remains a vibrant and effective ambassador for education and outreach and a grant maker for the "Seriously Amazing" Smithsonian.



The Mary Livingston Ripley Garden, next to the Arts & Industries Building, was created in 1988 by the SWC to honor their founder.