



About Family Matter

The Dallas Museum of Art unveiled *Family Matter*, the original commissioned work by British silversmith David Clarke on Friday, February 7, 2020 at the Museum's *Silver Supper*, which benefits the Museum's Decorative Arts Acquisition Endowment Fund. This is the first time the twenty-six-year-old fundraiser commissioned a work of art for the Museum.

Family Matter is comprised of 75 silver pieces donated by 36 members of the Dallas community, including decorative arts and contemporary art enthusiasts. Clarke's unique work will become part of the Museum's permanent collection and will be on view in the galleries in the future.

The idea behind the commissioned work began when Sarah Schleuning, the DMA's Margot B. Perot Senior Curator of Decorative Arts and Design and interim chief curator, joined the museum in March 2018 following *Silver Supper's* 25th anniversary. With a planned two-year hiatus for the event, Schleuning wanted to recognize the tradition and history of the Museum's renowned collection and the great strength of the DMA's silver, while looking at ways to also revitalize the fundraiser by having a special project leading up to the event that would further engage the community.

Conversations began with David Clarke, London's premier silversmith, on the idea of a project that would connect what silver means to people through a specially commissioned work.

“The thing that was really compelling to me about David was that he's steeped in the tradition, which is really important, but he is also looking at it in a very contemporary way and, like us, is trying to think of ways to make the ideas behind silver relevant to people today,” said Schleuning.

Clarke first visited Dallas to meet with key people in the community, DMA staff as well as Museum patrons and individuals deeply vested in the Silver Supper. He then returned a second time in late summer 2019 for an event where attendees were invited to bring their own silver that had meaning to them but might not be pieces that they would pass down to generations.

From the 75 donated pieces, Clarke has created a singular piece - *Family Matter*.

“I was really interested in moving out from the museum into the community and understanding what silver could mean to people, to families, to generations and the stories that came with the pieces,” Clarke said. “And so it was very much about family. The museum is a family; the community is a family.”

Clarke's wish is that the next generation of the 36 families who donated their pieces can come into the museum and they will be able to identify that piece from their family; staying within the idea of inheriting the piece. While some of the donated pieces might be altered in some way, they were each used in the final piece and all are recognizable; each element can be seen but they have been recast in different ways in a less traditional setting.

“I hope the way David has played with these pieces in really different ways, sparks people's desire to bring out their own great pieces, to polish them, to think about them, but also to use them in new inventive ways,” Schleuning added. “They don't have to just be a candlestick; you can flip them upside down, and you

can recast them in contemporary ways. You can live with them in ways that make meaning for you instead of what you feel the role they were originally cast in.”

While some of the pieces of silver on their own might not have had the opportunity to be a part of the Museum’s permanent collection, having a piece as part of *Family Matter* will allow individuals to now be donors and patrons of the Museum through the nature of this project.

Clarke feels *Family Matter* is the best piece he has created to date.

“There was a tremendous amount of thought and respect and desire to make *Family Matter* something very special,” he said. “And one of the great things about this project was the process of getting people to engage in the idea, and people who gave are really excited to see the finished work. It’s quite a magical thing.”

As one of Britain’s most highly creative silversmiths, David Clarke’s work is widely sought after both in the UK and internationally and is featured within a number of prominent museum collections, including the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; The National Museum of Northern Ireland, The National Museum, Oslo; and the Dallas Museum of Art.

Detail photos follow:









