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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Historic Craft School Infuses Museum Collection With Contemporary Aesthetics

*Compelling Furniture Exhibit between North Bennet Street School and The Trustees of Reservations
Opens to the Public at Fruitlands Museum November 18, 2017*

Boston & Harvard, MA — November 6, 2017— Fostering a conversation between historic objects and contemporary, hand-crafted counterparts, “Conversations in Craft” is a collaborative exhibition between **Fruitlands Museum** (operated by the [Trustees of Reservations](#)), and the acclaimed **North Bennet Street School** ([NBSS](#)) located in Boston and opening on Saturday, November 18, 2017 at Fruitlands Museum in Harvard. Organized by the Trustees’ Senior Curator, Christie Jackson, this exhibition will feature newly created, original pieces of wooden furniture made by master craftspeople from NBSS, alongside historic pieces of furniture hand-selected from the Trustees’ historic houses.

Thirteen participants in all worked closely with Jackson to select a piece of historical furniture to respond to, and “answer” in a range of ways—not with copies or reproductions, but with a freshly-inspired, custom work. In some cases, the new pieces are a contemporary companion to an 18th or 19th-century object, such as a chair for a desk, but among the thirteen pairs is a sculptural floral carving that seems to bloom in response to bud-like inlay made in the 1820s. Each pair of objects—old and new—will be displayed together in the Art Gallery at Fruitlands Museum. The Trustees’ furniture pieces are drawn from their permanent collection, including the notable estates of Naumkeag and the Mission House, in Stockbridge, MA, and the William Cullen Bryant Homestead in Cummington, MA.

“We are so pleased to be working with North Bennet Street School on this unique exhibition,” said Christie Jackson. “The process of curating this has truly been a conversation, where we are exploring the stories of these historic objects, discovering the ways they were crafted, and creating a new dialogue between old and new with contemporary interpretations created by these talented craftsmen. Through these conversations, we are celebrating and sharing the rich tradition of furniture making in New England that continues to this day.”

"We're very excited to be a part of this exhibit, as there's a shared appreciation of cultural heritage between our organization and The Trustees. It's a heritage that's not only in the past, but continues to be enriched by our generation," said Miguel Gómez-Ibáñez, President of NBSS. "There are people today who make fine furniture by hand, much like those who crafted the exquisite pieces from The Trustees collection," he added. "These new objects are designed to endure—to last as long as the Fruitlands pieces have. Perhaps one day they'll become heirlooms and collector's pieces as well."

Fruitlands Museum was acquired by The Trustees in 2016, adding a significant cultural property to the organization's network of cultural, natural, and agricultural sites around the Commonwealth. This collaborative exhibition is an opportunity to highlight furniture from its permanent collection and what it means to master craftspeople from Boston's acclaimed NBSS. Fruitlands was originally a utopian enclave, led by Transcendentalists Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane in the mid-1800s. Clara Endicott Sears, first drawn to the location by panoramic views of the Nashua River Valley, established a museum to preserve that history in 1914, over time adding numerous collections alongside the original Alcott Farmhouse, including a Shaker Museum, Native American Museum, Art Museum. The Trustees also host exhibitions, lectures, workshops and special events at the property year-round.

Many of the new pieces created for the exhibit will be available for sale by the makers. The exhibit, which opens on Saturday, November 18, 2017 and runs through March 28, 2018 will feature a variety of public events, talks, and demonstrations at Fruitlands Museum throughout the winter and early spring. The first event will be an Open House and Reception on Saturday, December 2, with an opportunity to meet the artisans and curators. For a line up of upcoming events and to check hours and times of operation, please visit www.thetrustees.org/fruitlands.

Quick facts

Conversations in Craft: Furniture from The Trustees Collection and North Bennet Street School Artisans

- On view from Saturday, November 18, 2017 to Sunday, March 28, 2018 in the Fruitlands Museum Art Gallery, 102 Prospect Hill Rd, Harvard MA 01451. Gallery Hours are Saturdays and Sundays, noon - 5pm.
- Open House, Saturday, December 2, 12:00-5:00 PM. Reception from 2:00-4:00 PM, with remarks at 3:00 PM.
- For a link to the press kit, including artist bios and photos, visit this [Dropbox link](#).

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About Fruitlands Museum

Fruitlands Museum, a 210-acre historic, natural, and cultural destination based in Harvard, MA, recently became a property of The Trustees of Reservations. Founded in 1914 by author and preservationist Clara Endicott Sears, the Museum takes its name from an experimental utopian community that existed on this site in 1843 and was led by Transcendentalists Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane. Fruitlands is dedicated to New England history, art, and nature, and its collections include: The Fruitlands Farmhouse, The Shaker Museum, The Native American Museum, and The Art Museum. It is located on 210 acres of land with panoramic views of the Nashua River Valley, including 2.5 miles of meadows and woodland recreational trails. www.fruitlands.org.

About The Trustees

Founded by landscape architect Charles Eliot in 1891, The Trustees has, for more than 125 years, been a catalyst for important ideas, endeavors, and progress in Massachusetts. As a steward of distinctive and dynamic places of both historic and cultural value, The Trustees is the nation's first and Massachusetts' largest preservation and conservation nonprofit, and its landscapes and landmarks continue to inspire discussion, innovation, and action today as they did in the past. A nonprofit supported by members, friends and donors, our more than 115 sites are

destinations for residents, members, and visitors alike, welcoming millions of guests annually.

www.thetrustees.org.

About North Bennet Street School

One of the nation's oldest schools for hands-on training in traditional trades and fine craftsmanship, North Bennet Street School (NBSS.edu) is internationally known for its programs and for helping students to achieve meaningful lives and livelihoods. The School offers full-time programs in Bookbinding, Carpentry, Cabinet & Furniture Making, Jewelry Making & Repair, Locksmithing & Security Technology, Piano Technology, Preservation Carpentry, and Violin Making & Repair. NBSS also provides continuing education classes in a range of related disciplines. The School is located at an impressive, 64,000 sf facility in Boston's historic North End, the community in which it was originally founded in 1881.