



Merryll Saylan: This Is Your Life

as a monographic survey, and also to Saylan's artistic emphasis on everyday experience. Thus, the phrase could be read either as something said to Saylan by the curator, or as something said by Saylan to the visitor.

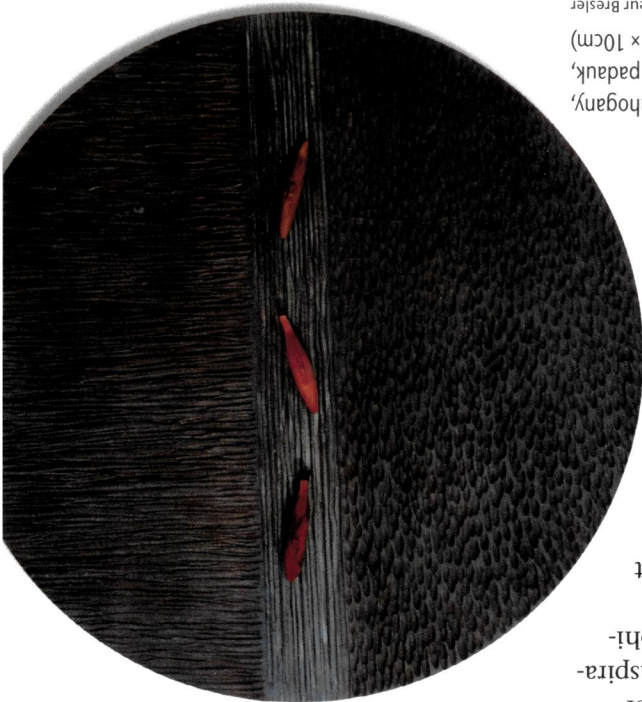
—Glenn Adamson, Curator

sculptures (which address themes of domesticity) through her mature works: subtly modulated platters; towers of small bowls; and still-life inspired objects. Also included will be her major work *Turning Sixty*, from the Center for Art in Wood collection, a project that marked a biographical milestone in the artist's life.

The exhibition design—realized by Dan Saal and Erika Brask of Thoughtful Design—will take inspiration from this notion of a biographical unfurling. It will be arranged chronologically, with all works set out on a single platform, each marking its own moment in a life. This surface will be compound-curved, like a hilly landscape or ocean surface, with works sitting atop rises or nestling into hollows.

The title, *This Is Your Life*, has a double meaning. It both refers to the show itself

Swimming Upstream, 2012, Mahogany, milk paint; fish: walnut, cherry, padauk, 28" x 28" x 4" (71cm x 71cm x 10cm)
Collection of Fleur Bresler



Rice Bowls and Container, 1976, Laminated birds-eye maple; Container is 8 3/4" x 8" (22cm x 20cm); Bowls are 4" x 4" (10cm x 10cm); Paddle is 8" (20cm) long
Arizona State University Art Museum, Gift of Joanne Rapp



Tea Set, 1997, Boxelder, 6" x 6" (15cm x 15cm)
Photo: Tony Boase
The Center for Art in Wood Museum Collection, Gift of the Artist

In November, The Center for Art in Wood will open the exhibition *Merryll Saylan: This Is Your Life*, for which I am acting as guest curator.

Long recognized for her unusual painterly approach, Saylan was president of the AAW in 1994-1995. She came of age at a time when technique and spectacular timbers were the two primary emphases in the field, but decided to go another way: "scraping" her work—a more incremental and less risk-taking approach than that of many of her peers—and infusing relatively bland woods with beautiful dyes. Rather than showpieces of raw skill, her objects come across as lyrical and poetic personal statements.

In retrospect, Saylan's embrace of a slow and meditative aesthetic seems visionary. Her works have an ongoing resonance that seems more contemporary with every passing year.

The retrospective at the Center for Art in Wood will take the measure of Saylan's career with works borrowed from both private and public collections. These range from her early large

Merryll Saylan: This Is Your Life will be on view at Philadelphia's The Center for Art in Wood November 2, 2018, to January 20, 2019. For more, visit centerforartinwood.org.



Photo: Mike Powell